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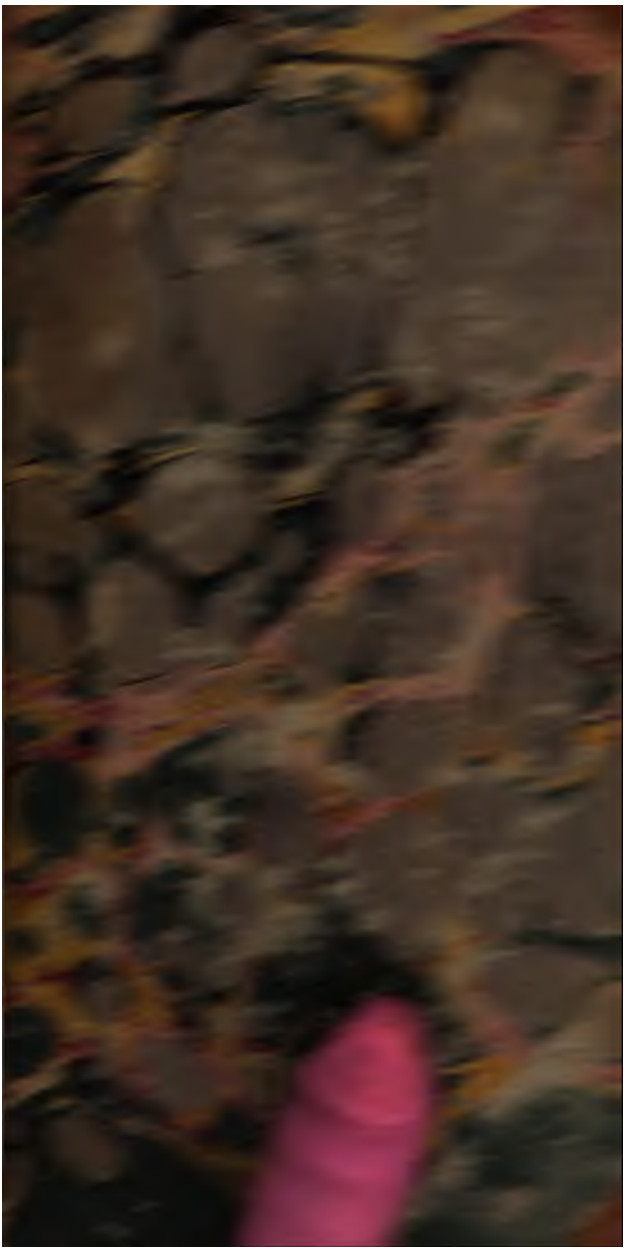

# M A R I A:

## A N O V E L.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By the AUTHOR of

GEORGE BATEMAN.

# MARIA:

## A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.
M.DCC.LXXXV.

250. g. 197.

# MARIA.

## CHAPTER I.

IT was my father who entered; and with him a young man of an appearance tolerably genteel, notwithſtanding a certain careleſſneſs in his dreſs and deportment that bordered upon ſlovenlineſs. This perſon my father introduced to me by the name of Railton, telling me in a whiſper, he was the gentleman he had heretofore ſaid he ſhould bring to ſee me. At firſt my vexation and embarraſſment at the preſence of a ſtranger

almoſt deprived me of the power of complying with the cuſtomary forms of good-breeding; but a moment's recollection made me in a certain degree rejoice at it, ſince it would, in all probability, ſooner deprive me of the company of Lord Henry, which was now become truly painful to me.

Lord Henry perceiving it impoſſible to converſe farther with me, ſummoned all the reſolution he could command, and withdrew; the look he gave me at that moment ſtrongly painted to me his mortification at this interruption, and his extreme affliction at leaving me without having obtained any confeſſion in his favour that might warrant hope. That look! oh heavens, it now riſes to my view!—forgive my weakneſs, amiable Miſs Mordaunt—pity my want of fortitude—but do not let this burſt of tears leſſen me in your eſteem.

"Oh, do not conceive me ſo loſt to humanity,"

humanity," ſaid Maria, mingling her tears with thoſe of Miſs Hampden, "as not to feel moſt poignantly a ſituation ſo cruelly embarraſſing."

Maria having wiped away the tears that bedewed the cheeks of her fair and unfortunate friend, begging her not to dwell on particulars which affected her ſo forcibly—Miſs Hampden proceeded as follows:

In returning this parting compliment of Lord Henry, I took the precaution of ſuppreſſing his title, fearing to increaſe the curioſity of Railton, who I thought obſerved the countenances of both my lord and myſelf with a ſcrutinizing eye.

When his lordſhip had left us, my father inquired who he was:—I anſwered with an air ſomewhat confuſed—"A near relation of Mrs. G——."

"I think," ſaid Mr. Railton, "I never ſaw a more ſtriking reſemblance

than that young gentleman bears to the C—— family."

I bluſhed, I heſitated, I had drawn myſelf into a dilemma from which I knew not how to extricate myſelf: concluding however, from the manner in which he ſpoke, that he had ſome knowledge of the perſon of Lord Henry, I was going to add, that he was the ſecond ſon of the duke of C——; but it inſtantly occurred to me, that if he ſhould *not* have known my lord, my having avoided mentioning at firſt to my father his rank, and having ſtudiouſly uſed the appellative *Sir*, would of itſelf create ſuſpicion in the mind of Railton, by inducing him to think I wiſhed to conceal from him and my father the quality of my gueſt. I mention this circumſtance ſo particularly, becauſe you will find it was afterwards of ſome conſequence in my affairs.

In order to prevent further converſa-

tion

tion on this ſubject, I aſked Mr. Railton the news of the day; upon which he began to entertain me with ſundry pieces of very curious and ſcandalous intelligence, but collected from the conduct of thoſe who are ſaid to form the politeſt circles. After which he deſcended to the amours—matrimonial adventures—diſputes with the managers, &c. &c. of the actors and actreſſes; to all which (as I happened to know but few of the characters in high life he had mentioned, otherwiſe than by name, and was totally unacquainted with theatres and theatrical people) I paid but little attention; and not unfrequently, I am afraid, uttered the cuſtomary ejaculations—good heavens!—bleſs me!—certainly—to be ſure—yes, yes—&c. &c. not a little *mal apropos*. Mr. Railton however did not perceive my inattention; for as he was always perfectly ſatisfied with the brilliance of his own *oral effuſions*, he naturally

concluded every one elſe to be ſo. Having therefore (as he thought) greatly entertained me, he pauſed for ſome minutes:—after which, finding I did not endeavour to ſupport the converſation with any degree of vivacity or attention, he ſaid— with an air that implied, *As I have been entertaining you ſo long, you ought now to ſtrive to do ſo by me*—

"I underſtand, Madam, that you are a great *genius*, and that you *write*; I ſhould be happy to ſee ſome of your literary productions."

"I have ſometimes amuſed myſelf a little in that way," ſaid I, vexed at his requeſt, "but I have no ſort of claim to the epithet you honour me with, nor do I aſpire to the title of an author."

"Oh! you muſt not ſay ſo;—too much modeſty is a great fault in a writer—If you have *written*, you will doubtleſs *publiſh*."

"Is that an invariable conſequence?" ſaid I.

"Yes,

"Yes, now-a-days, Madam, as lightning precedes thunder: — Oh, you muſt publiſh!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Madam; but let me intreat you to favour me with a ſight of your manuſcripts.—I can't exiſt a moment longer without you favour me with a ſight of them."

My father now inſiſted upon my ſhowing the papers to Mr. Railton;—and therefore I complied, though much againſt my inclination. Mr. Railton praiſed my tranſlations, proteſting they had all the ſpirit and fire of their originals; but this compliment had no tendency to inflate my vanity, for I ſoon found that he was unacquainted with both languages; his erudition being confined pretty nearly to the knowledge of the lighter kinds of Engliſh poetry, plays, and the periodical proſe writings of Addiſon, Swift, Pope, &c. &c. by

which reading he had picked up a ſmattering of criticiſm, and acquired a knack of ſcribbling with facility, without poſſeſſing any ſhare of learning or real genius. After repeated eulogiums on two or three little poems of my *own writing*, he ſaw in the book into which I had copied the tranſlations, he again adverted to his former poſition, namely, that I *muſt publiſh*.

"I would not have you though," continued he, "write poetry, for that does not ſell equal to the time and trouble beſtowed upon it.—You had better write for the ſtage; *that* is the eaſieſt way to fame and fortune."

"But ſuppoſe I have no talent for dramatic writing?—I don't know that I have any, I am ſure."

"Oh yes, I am ſure you have;—undoubtedly you *muſt*; if you can write in one way, you can in another."

Depreſſed as my ſpirits were, I could not

not forbear ſmiling at this ſpeech; indeed I thought at firſt he had been in jeſt; but I was miſtaken, and he went on very ſeriouſly thus:—

"Yes, yes, my dear Madam, the beſt way you can employ your talents, will be to write both a tragedy and a comedy, and then you will ſee which ſtile of writing you ſucceed in beſt, that is to ſay, which you write with the moſt eaſe and in the ſhorteſt time, that is the point; for in the profeſſion of an author there is more to be got by *quantity* than *quality*:—You'll get more by half a dozen indifferent things than by one *good* one."

"Heavens!" ſaid I.

"I think I would adviſe you to write a comedy:—Sprightly comedy is much wanted—we have generally three or four tragedies to one comedy.—Thalia appears but ſeldom;—if you could introduce her a few times with ſucceſs

to the ſtage, you'd ſoon make your fortune.

"Indeed!" I replied, "that is a very inſpiring conſideration!"

"Oh, without doubt,—certainly,—I have no fear but you would make ſix or ſeven hundred a year with great eaſe;—for you need not be at the trouble to ſtudy for all your characters; you may buy them at any of the book-ſtalls."

"I don't comprehend you," ſaid I.

"Why," returned he, "I'll tell you what I'd adviſe you to do,—and I aſſure you I would not take the trouble of communicating my thoughts to you if I had not the higheſt reſpect for your talents, and your ſex,—eſpecially as I am a dramatic writer myſelf."

I was impatient to hear this important communication; as, from what had already fallen from him on the ſubject of *authorſhip*, I concluded it muſt be infinitely curious.

"Pray

"Pray be ſo kind," ſaid I, "Sir, to favour me with your opinion."

He anſwered me, as nearly as I can recollect, in the following words, or at leaſt in words to the ſame effect:—

"Why, Madam, if you mean to ſucceed, that is, to *write* a *great number* of pieces, and all with *effect*—which in other words is to ſay, *get a great deal of money*—you muſt take the following method of acquiring a facility in this ſpecies of compoſition: You muſt purchaſe all the old plays you meet with;—you may pick a great many up for a trifling ſum at different book-ſtalls.—When you have got them home, lay them on the floor, ſit down in the middle of them, and never leave them (but at meal-times) till you have ſkimmed through them all; by this means you will have acquired the dramatic *ſtile* and *manner*, and having fixed upon a ſet of characters, from what you have read, you will have nothing then to do but a little to

diſguiſe their features and put them into action. But you muſt be careful never to take two *ſituations* out of one comedy; no, that will be too palpable;—and be ſure get the oldeſt plays you can rummage up. I know a great many people who have been ridiculous enough to copy the characters of modern play-writers; but that's a confounded fooliſh piece of buſineſs;—that will never do."

I looked very hard at Mr. Railton, to try if I could diſcover any traces of burleſque or ſatire in his countenance (for I really apprehended he had been ridiculing, tho' very unjuſtly, our modern comedies) but all was grave and earneſt:—he continued his lecture with another admonition—

"There is one character that you muſt never fail to introduce in all your pieces, whether farce, opera, or pantomime;—but for this I believe you will find no model in the old plays."

"Pray,"

"Pray," said I, "what sort of character must this be?"

"Oh, one that will cost you very little trouble in the drawing; as half his merit will consist in his wearing our naval uniform."

"And pray, Sir, of what humour must this blue-coated gentleman be? and what kind of business in the piece is to be allotted to him?"

Oh, it is of very little consequence whether he possess any peculiarity of character or not; nor at all material whether he does any thing towards bringing about the plot, or lets it alone: the chief point to be aimed at, is to take care that he appear in almost every scene, and has a sufficient number of well-rounded periods to *let off* about *the glory of the English* NAVY,—*the bravery of British Tars*,—*the honour of old England*,—*the excellence of English roast beef*,—*the merit of drinking grog*,—*and the beauty*

*beauty and virtue of Engliſh women*,—with plentiful *ſarcaſms* on the French nation. All theſe things *tell* wonderfully."

"*Tell*," ſaid I, "What do they tell?"

"That is a theatrical term," ſaid he, ſmiling, "to expreſs that ſuch and ſuch things will pleaſe the upper gallery, and draw down thundering applauſe."

More converſation of this kind paſſed, which I will not trouble you with; at length, to my great joy, he roſe to depart, ſaying he ſhould be late at the theatre, and that he was obliged to write a dramatic *critique* every night.

"I have not always troubled myſelf to go to the houſe," ſaid he, "but I believe I muſt in future make it a rule to go, for I have lately been very unlucky. The other evening I was half aſleep when I took up the pen to write the *critique*, and not having been at the play, I inquired what had been repreſented, and

was

was told. As I knew by whom the principal characters of the play were uſually performed, I ſat down, without giving myſelf the trouble to examine the play-bill, and wrote a flaming panegyric on the actor in whoſe *intereſt* I was, and paſſed ſlightly over the great and uncommon merits of the gentleman who generally performed the other capital part.—It was diſpatched to the preſs immediately.—But judge my vexation when I diſcovered, the next morning, that the *actors* had exchanged *parts* the night before;—of courſe my criticiſm atteſted to the public that I had not been preſent at the repreſentation."

"A terrible diſgrace indeed," ſaid I, "How could you poſſibly get over it?"

"Oh, as to diſgrace with the public, my dear Madam, we don't ſo much mind that in our profeſſion; however I brought myſelf off very well with the town, by inſerting an erratum;—but the moſt

moſt provoking part of the ſtory is, that this erratum has ruined me with the gentleman whom (for certain pecuniary conſiderations) I was in duty bound to ſerve; for by this alteration the adulation I had ſo laviſhly beſtowed upon him, fell to the ſhare of his theatrical rival; and the ſcanty half-praiſe, or rather detraction, I had deſigned for the latter, became the lot of the former.—But time flies—I muſt make haſte to the theatre, or I may ſtand a chance of being in the ſame predicament again.—Adieu, my dear Madam;—I am your moſt devoted;—you may command my advice on any ſubject."

So ſaying, he withdrew.

CHAP.

## CHAP. II.

THE next day we received the following card.—"Mr. Railton preſents compliments to Mr. and Miſs Hampden, begs the favour of their company to tea to-morrow evening. The ingenious Mr. Blackwell and his lady will be of the party."

I begged my father to ſend word that we were engaged, but he would not give ear to this requeſt; he ſaid that I ſhould be highly to blame not to cultivate the acquaintance of Railton, who might be of the utmoſt ſervice to me in the literary way. I could not ſee things in the light he did; but I acquieſced in his determination. When my father had written an anſwer to the card, I aſked

 him

him if he knew the gentleman and lady mentioned by Railton.

"I am not acquainted with them," returned he, "but I have met them in company;—Mr. Blackwell is very well known as a man of great abilities; he is not a mere pretender like Railton, and I dare say you will like him very much; he has a great deal of wit and humour; and is reckoned a mighty good-hearted man; and his wife (though perhaps you may think her somewhat low-bred) from what I have seen of her, seems a decent sort of person."

"But I much wonder, Sir, the kind of man you describe Mr. Blackwell to be, should associate with so insignificant a smatterer as Railton."

"True, child; but I have seen him frequently in company with persons of less consequence, and far more ignorant than Mr. Railton, and that in preference, by what I have heard, to *better*."

A propensity

A propenſity to low company is, I fear, too often ſeen in perſons of diſtinguiſhed talents; I can derive its origin from nothing but a VANITY of the groſſeſt and moſt abject kind:—a love of being looked up to as the *informers* of their ſociety. It is true, the *juſt* PRIDE of a man of true genius may be often a bar to his advancement in life, by prompting him to retreat, with a generous diſdain, from the hand that might lead him to fame and fortune, when he thinks it ungracefully extended towards him. But if the *latter* keeps him from *riſing* in the world, the *former* never fails to *ſink* him; and that by ſure gradations, to the loweſt abyſs of contempt.

But I fatigue you, my dear Miſs Mordaunt, with my too minute details.—To return to my ſtory:—We went the next day to Mr Railton's; Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell had arrived there before us: as you have ſeen them both, I will not attempt

attempt to describe them to you.—Mr. Railton, with much ceremony, introduced me to Mrs. Blackwell, as a lady of *great genius*. Mr. Blackwell, as soon as the customary forms had passed, and we were seated, paid me half a dozen high-flown compliments on my person, winding them up with comparing me to the famous Corinna, equally remarkable for her *beauty* and her *wit*, who bore away the poetical prize from Pindar.

Much more of this kind passed before we entered into any discourse that afforded me an opportunity of forming a judgment of his understanding and talents. At length however a conversation took place, in which he displayed the symptoms of genius, and a mind improved by the possession of a considerable share of classical knowledge. After we had conversed some time, he expressed again his wishes to see something of my writing. His good understanding and acquired knowledge gave

me

me a favourable opinion of his candour; whilſt the praiſes he beſtowed on ſome obſervations I had made on a favourite Latin author, perhaps flattered my ſelf-love, and induced me the more readily to accede to his requeſt. He appeared enraptured with my little pieces; he burſt forth into repeated eulogiums as he read them; and afterwards expreſſed, in enthuſiaſtic terms, his love of genius, literature, and the fine arts.

"How I deſpiſe," cried he, "thoſe people bleſt with affluence, who take no pains to find out and reward genius, or, when it is brought to their knowledge, take every opportunity to treat its poſſeſſor with contempt!—nay, there is a ſet of people who are, in my opinion, ten times worſe than theſe—I mean they who make them the amuſement and the conveniency of the moment,—who flatter them for a time, and court their ſociety;—but after they have acquired the

fame

ſame of patronizing talents, upon ſome ſlight pretence of diſguſt leave them, without any other advantage than the honour of having once been upon terms of intimacy with ſuch and ſuch great men;" alas! continued he, lifting up his eye-lids, "what a melancholy inſtance was poor Chatterton of the neglect of genius in this age!"

"I have heard he was a very wild, diſorderly young man," ſaid Mr. Railton.

"Oh, dear Sir," ſaid Mr. Blackwell, with an air of great candour, "oh, Sir, I believe they who have vilified him ſince his death, have done it becauſe they are aſhamed to have it known that they treated the follies of youth, and the flights of excentric genius, with as unrelenting a ſeverity as a good mind would have ſhown to crimes of the blackeſt dye.—I am clear, Sir, that he was one of the worthieſt beings, as well

as

as the greateſt geniuſes, that ever exiſted in any age or country—and had I had the ſupreme happineſs of knowing him, I would have allowed for all his little foibles and peculiarities; and whilſt I had poſſeſſed a ſhilling he ſhould have had ſix-pence of it." Here he pauſed, wiping off a tear.

"Aye, that I am ſure you would, my dear Mr. Blackwell," ſaid Mrs. Blackwell, "for I have heard you *ſay* ſo a hundred times over, in different companies."

"Indeed, Madam," returned I, "I honour Mr. Blackwell greatly for the animated zeal with which he ſpeaks of that elegant and hapleſs bard."

"Oh, my ſweeteſt Arachne," ſaid he, "you are too good to me, to praiſe me ſo much to Miſs Hampden;" upon which ſhe ſtretched out her hand, and he came acroſs the room and moulded it in his.

"No, I am not too good to you," ſaid ſhe: "there are many other things I could tell; but I ſhan't, becauſe I know they'd make you bluſh, you have ſuch a poor opinion of your own *merit*, and ſuch a great one of *mine*.—I am ſure ſome people would be quite ſpoilt if they were to be adored as you adore me."

"Oh, my ſweeteſt Arachne, not at all; I'm ſure I do no more than my *duty*;—you have ſuch uncommon excellencies and beauties in your character that,—Oh, my ſweeteſt Arachne, you are—(*here as he ſpake he looked into the ſtreet, as I imagined, to find ſomething to relieve himſelf from this dialogue, and in a minute exclaimed*) "Look, my ſweeteſt Arachne, there are the dancing dogs, that diverted you ſo much the other day."

She now ran to look into the ſtreet, as did the reſt of the company. For

my own part, I wiſhed to prolong our excurſion to the window as much as poſſible, preferring the ſight of dancing-dogs and monkeys to that of the human ſpecies exhibiting themſelves in far more ludicrous attitudes.

When we were re-ſeated, Mr. Blackwell and Mr. Railton were both urgent in perſuading me to publiſh what I had written; and the former offered, if I would do him and Mrs. Blackwell the favour of viſiting them, they would introduce me to ſeveral of the moſt diſtinguiſhed literary characters of the age. Even Mrs. Blackwell, with ſome degree of earneſtneſs, preſſed me to viſit them, deſiring me to fix an early day for that purpoſe; which I did the more readily, becauſe Mr. Blackwell told me he would invite Dr. Edgeware, for whoſe great knowledge, talents, and character, I had the higheſt veneration. The reſt of the converſa-

tion that paſſed I will not trouble you with: — About nine o'clock in the evening we departed.

## CHAP. III.

I WENT to Mr. Blackwell's on the day appointed, where I met ſeveral very entertaining characters; Dr. Edgeware was not of the party; he had, it ſeems, been taken ſuddenly ill, or we ſhould have had the pleaſure of his company. Little converſation paſſed at this interview but what was foreign to myſelf and the characters I wiſh to exemplify. Mr. and Mrs. Blackwell however were oppreſſingly civil to me, and both expreſſed the livelieſt pleaſure in my company, intreating

treating me, when I took my leave of them, to devote to them as much of my time as I could ſpare.

In ſpite of the ungracious idea Mrs. Blackwell's countenance had at firſt given me of her mind—the eagerneſs with which ſhe courted the acquaintance of one who could from ſituation reflect no honour upon her, nor make any return to her ſervices but gratitude, induced me to think ſhe might have a heart capable of friendſhip;—and perhaps at the time ſhe really felt ſomething ariſe in her breaſt which ſhe miſtook for the emotions of friendſhip; but which in verity was nothing more than that ſatisfaction trifling minds feel from a gratification of the love of novelty;—a new acquaintance (or, as they are pleaſed to term it, a new friend) beſtowing the ſame kind of pleaſure as a new gown or a new cap; and the one as ſpeedily goes out of

faſhion with this claſs of women as the other.—The gown or cap however may be thrown aſide without the aſſignment of any cauſe; but for diſcarding the friend there muſt be ſome plauſible excuſe given, or the imputation of a ridiculous caprice may chance to fall upon them. The only thing then to be done in that caſe is, to throw as large a portion of obloquy as poſſible upon the perſon who is to be thus diſcarded.—And from this propenſity in the human mind aroſe, I preſume, the Spaniſh proverb:—If you would hang a dog, you muſt firſt give him an ill name.—But to return; though, through Mrs. Blackwell's having the misfortune to be naturally dull, her ſociety was not the moſt pleaſant (her manners being equally as unpoliſhed as her mind); yet a friend, whether charming or not, is a ſoothing acquiſition to the unfortunate. As to

Mr.

Mr. Blackwell, his company was entertaining and agreeable, when he thought proper to repreſs that acrimony of ſpirit with which he too frequently viewed and commented upon the faults and the failings of many of his friends (when abſent) to whom he paid the moſt obſequious adulation.—But I have before deſcribed him to you.

It is certain the hyperbolical manner in which he made my eulogium, and expreſſed himſelf my well-wiſher, led me ſometimes a little to doubt the ſincerity of ſome of his profeſſions; but theſe doubts I took pains to check as often as they obtruded, by reflecting on the aſſiduity with which he introduced me to his friends, and endeavoured to be of ſervice to me. It is to him I owe my acquaintance with my great and amiable friend Lady Melmoth, who no ſooner was informed of my ſituation, than ſhe expreſſed a wiſh

to ſerve me, and that in terms ſo ſoothing, ſo elegant, and ſo unaffectedly benevolent, that I made no ſcruple of unfolding to her a little hiſtory of myſelf and my affairs.

I concealed from her indeed no part of my life, but that which related to Lord Henry. As I underſtood Lady Melmoth was acquainted with ſome part of the C—— family, I thought there would be an indelicacy in mentioning his lordſhip's attachment to me, when I had determined never to converſe with him again. I therefore imputed my ſeparation from Mrs. G—, to her marriage (which had been celebrated ſince my arrival in town) with Colonel Herbert, and which was in reality the true cauſe.

Lady Melmoth ſaid, with a ſmile, ſhe knew the colonel, and did not think it unnatural that a lady of the age I had deſcribed Mrs. G—, ſhould be

be anxious to remove from her houſe an attractive young woman, when ſhe had determined to wed a man of Col. Herbert's youth and character. Her ladyſhip added, that ſhe thought it would be proper I ſhould endeavour to put myſelf under the protection of ſome woman of faſhion, who might wiſh a domeſtic friend and companion; and offered to introduce me to ſome ladies of her acquaintance, whom ſhe thought would be likely to ſerve me. I accepted this offer with the utmoſt gratitude, telling her I ſhould prefer the ſituation ſhe mentioned, to a dependance upon writing for the ſtage, which had been ſtrenuouſly ſuggeſted to me by Mr. Blackwell and his friend Railton, as I diſtruſted my own talents for dramatic compoſition; and could never bring myſelf to make uſe of the paltry reſources Mr. Railton had in his firſt interview pointed out to me.

In the early part of my intimacy with the Blackwells, they kept up the farce of exceſſive fondneſs for each other very capitally, and ſurfeited me with the indelicacy of their behaviour; but at laſt the temper of Mrs. Blackwell could no longer conceal itſelf; and, notwithſtanding the utmoſt anxiety on the part of her huſband to prevent it, ſhe gave me ſeveral ſpecimens of the ſort of lectures ſhe entertained him with when they were alone. On her recovery from her fits of ill-humour, ſhe uſed to make the moſt ridiculous excuſes to me, for her behaviour, you can conceive:—ſometimes telling me a ſervant had put her out of humour; at others, that ſhe had been at market, and bought proviſions very dear, &c. adding, "Theſe things put me beſide myſelf, and make me fall upon my poor dear Mr. Blacky in that manner; and I am ſure he is the ſweeteſt man alive."

And

And then, projecting her face, ſhe would deſire him to come from his book or writing, and ſalute her. On his part, I believe, having underſtanding, he felt theſe unavoidable expoſitions more ſtrongly than ſhe did. He was perpetually inventing the moſt ingenious apologies in the world for their quarrels. I remember he once told me,—" his deareſt Arachne had ſo much ſenſibility, that tho' ſhe was naturally of the ſweeteſt temper in the world, it made her ſometimes appear to be quite a malicious creature, particularly with reſpect to *him*, whom ſhe doated upon!"

In ſhort, I ſaw ſo plainly, in ſpite of theſe manœuvres, that he led a miſerable life, that I pitied him extremely, and ſhould have done ſo yet more, had he not been ever the firſt to unveil the domeſtic diſſenſions of other people, making no allowances for a diſparity of

tempers, but delivering ſevere commentaries upon all the married people of his acquaintance who diſagreed, pronouncing deciſively, that they muſt be *very bad ſort of perſons.* Himſelf and his ſweeteſt Arachne he always repreſented as the niceſt models of conjugal perfection and happineſs.—There is no deſire, I believe, more prevalent than that of being *thought happy.* What numbers daily ſacrifice the moſt ingenuous and the beſt feelings of their hearts, at that pride-raiſed ſhrine!

Some months had now paſſed, during the latter part of which time I begun to perceive a material alteration in the behaviour of Mrs. Blackwell; indeed ſhe took but little pains to conceal the change from me. She ſeized every opportunity of ſtriving to leſſen me in the opinion of her huſband; and was always out of humour when he introduced me to his viſitors, with encomiums that brought

upon me any particular notice; and whatever ſhe heard me commended for, ſhe ſtrove, by a thouſand little indeſcribable inſinuations, delivered in a ſort of half-jeſting half-earneſt manner, to lower the merit of. There are ſome diſpoſitions ſo malicious, as even to envy the pity which the misfortunes of their aſſociates inſpire. She hated to ſee me with any body who had conceived a degree of friendſhip or regard for me; and at laſt, ſhe made parties of thoſe of her viſitors whom ſhe thought I liked beſt, and purpoſely left me out; taking care, the next time ſhe ſaw me, to tell me of them. As neither her perſon nor her wit ever ſubjected her to the ſhadow of a compliment, ſhe deteſted every one who had the leaſt attractions. She took frequent opportunities of reminding me, that (to uſe her own words) "I muſt not take all for goſpel that was ſaid to me, for that

people very often ſaid a great deal more than they thought; and often paid compliments only to amuſe themſelves, particularly men who knew the world."

Theſe remarks from a woman whom I could not but feel my inferior, both in underſtanding and obſervation, rouſed my reſentment; and, I own, I did not refrain from reminding her, with ſome degree of tartneſs,—"That I did not conſider myſelf as an abſolute novice to the world; and, as I had been bred from my infancy on a footing of intimacy with perſons who moved in an elegant ſphere of life, I thought myſelf as capable of judging of the degree of attention I ought to pay to common-place expreſſions of politeneſs, as herſelf."

She flew into a great paſſion of tears, and a violent hyſteric fit followed it, or *ſeemed* to follow it. She pretended to be

be extremely hurt, "that I could poſſibly take, what ſhe only meant as the kindeſt thing in the world, in an affronting light."

Her tears and pretended agitation affected me; and I ſtrove to flatter myſelf, that what I had imputed to ill-nature, had ariſen merely from a coarſeneſs of manners, and a wiſh of appearing to poſſeſs a ſuperior degree of penetration. She begged me to believe that ſhe had offended me through inattention, and not deſign; above all, entreating that I would not let any body know, particularly Lady Melmoth, that any diſpute had occurred between us.—I aſſured her I would not, and for ſome time we both wore the olive.

"I am glad to find," ſaid Maria, "ſhe had ſo much generoſity in her nature as to make thoſe conceſſions; and her deſire to conceal your little quarrel from

from Lady Melmoth, looked as if ſhe did not mean to affront you again."

"So *I* then thought," returned Miſs Hampden; "but I was greatly miſtaken: her deſign in wiſhing not to break with me at that juncture, was only owing to her having planned an injury for me, which was not then ripe for execution: As you will diſcover as I proceed.

CHAP.

## CHAP. IV.

AFTER this reconciliation, Mrs. Blackwell affected to treat me with augmented fondneſs; but I ſpeedily ſaw a growing coldneſs in the behaviour of her huſband towards me, that ſhowed itſelf in an omiſſion of certain polite and reſpectful attentions, which he had till then been ever ceremoniouſly ſedulous to perform.

This diſguſtful alteration, with the little friendſhip I felt for his wife, induced me to be leſs frequent in my viſits to them; inſomuch that their friend *Railton* took notice of it; and, as he called upon my father very often, ſaid to me one morning, when he happened to find me alone,—

"Pray,

"Pray, what is the reaſon, Miſs Hampden, I do not ſee you with the Blackwells ſo often as uſual?"

I did not ſcruple to mention what had offended me in their behaviour.

"Poh! poh! my dear Madam," returned he; "you muſt not mind theſe ſort of things;—people who live in the world ſee them and paſs them by. Perhaps ſhe thinks that, by making you her companion, ſhe has thrown herſelf into the ſhade; and that has put her out of humour with you.—Oh, if you are ſo ſoon appalled at the envy of your own ſex, you'll never get through the world with any *eclat*."

"But what inſpired you with theſe ſuſpicions?" ſaid I;—"Did they ſay any thing reſpecting me to you?"

"Oh, no; ſhe never addreſſed herſelf particularly to me; but I have heard her ſay, in a manner betwixt a jeſt and a ſneer, that you were a great

*wit*,

*wit*, and a great *genius*; and that you made her appear a mere cypher, &c. There are certain pretended half-jeſting ſentences, which, like *half aſide* ſpeeches in a play, you know, convey a full meaning to the auditors."

"But can motives like thoſe influence Mr. Blackwell's conduct? Can that occaſion his indifference? I might add, his ſlights and rudeneſſes."

"Oh, very poſſibly;—there is not a prouder being in the world than Blackwell; and if his wife has piqued his ſelf-love, by perſuading him that your brilliance has leſſened her conſequence, he'll hate you as cordially as ſhe does. For pride, which is the prime hinge on which all his actions turn, induces him to conſider a neglect of her as a neglect of himſelf, and to think that his merits ought to throw a ray of importance over her abſurdity and inſignificance. There is yet another motive which may

actuate

actuate him:—You have had an opportunity of seeing their domestic conduct, which I fancy is not perfectly consistent with the pretensions to extraordinary *amity* they make in public."

"I believe," said I, "there is nothing more likely to make a man one's enemy, than to have had an opportunity (though ever so undesignedly) of *seeing* those parts of his temper and conduct he is most anxious to conceal."

"Well, well—but we must not refine too much," said he; "they may have it in their power to serve you in some way or other; therefore I think I would not advise you to give up the acquaintance. If we live in this world, we must *become all things to all men.*—But *apropos*—do you mean to go to the new play which is to be performed to-night?"

"Oh no!" returned I;—"I have been at the first representation of

two

two or three new pieces this winter; but I have reſolved never to go to another."

"Why ſo? why ſo? my dear Madam."

"Becauſe it hurts my feelings in a manner I cannot deſcribe.—I ſat amidſt ſeveral who called themſelves the friends of the author, and who, during the whole time of the performance, deſcanted with great eaſe and fluency on his extreme poverty and diſtreſs; and the terrible diſgraces and diſaſters in which he and his family would be involved, ſhould the piece fail to ſucceed. They were heard with an air of ſupercilious contempt by many; whilſt the epithets, *Poor man! Poor wretch!* and *Poor devil!* were uttered by others with an unfeeling vacuity of aſpect, that ſhocked and provoked me to an extreme degree."

"In what part of the houſe were you?"

"The

"The green boxes; Mrs. Blackwell and I went in our hats."

"Then take the trouble of dreſſing to-night, and go into a front or ſide box, and you'll be ſure to hear nothing of the author; 'tis a million to one if you meet with any perſons there who know him; but if you ſhould, you may depend they'll take care not to mention ſo unfaſhionable and ſo *outre* an acquaintance as an author.—But *apropos*, of plays!—Pray have you done as I adviſed you? Have you attempted to write a dramatic piece?"

"If I had *not*, do you ſuppoſe your preſent diſcourſe likely to ſtimulate me?"

"Oh, you muſt not be diſcouraged by what I have ſaid; you know it is the audience *at large* who determine the merits of a play."

I had amuſed myſelf, for ſome days before, in trying my ſkill in the dramatic

matic way; and, as he urged me very much to let him peruſe what I had written, I ſhowed him two or three ſcenes of a comedy I had ſketched. He flew into raptures—proteſted I had more talents for writing in that line, than any poet of the preſent day. In ſhort, my dear Miſs Mordaunt, I ſhould fatigue you to death, were I to relate half the extravagant compliments he laviſhed upon me. Nor did he leave me till he had (with the air of one whoſe vanity took from him all ideas of rejection) declared himſelf my lover, and offered me his hand, heart, and fortune.

Mr. Railton had often profeſſed a moſt profound admiration of my talents, and frequently addreſſed me in the language of love; but had never till now, by making any direct propoſals, given me an opportunity of putting a ſtop to his ſuit by a refuſal.

As he concluded, however, I could hardly

hardly forbear ſmiling in his face; a moſt ludicrous idea had ſtarted into my head, namely—that his motive for avowing his deſire to unite his fate with mine, aroſe from his having made an imaginary diſcovery, that I poſſeſſed, or was likely to poſſeſs, an eſtate on the Parnaſſian mountain. But the evident appearance there was in his countenance, that he thought I could not but rejoice at his overture, wounded both my pride and my delicacy.

I anſwered, very coldly,—"I thank you for your expreſſions of eſteem and admiration, Mr. Railton; but I feel no inclination at preſent to change my ſituation; and, therefore, ſhould be obliged to you to importune me no further on this head, as no ſolicitations will at all alter my ſentiments."

He then ſaid, "he ſuppoſed I was particularly engaged elſewhere;" with a look

a look that expreſſed it *muſt be ſo*, if I could refuſe him.

"I do not think myſelf obliged, Sir, to make any explanation upon this ſubject," ſaid I, ſomewhat haughtily; and my father coming into the room at that inſtant, prevented any more converſation of this kind. I was rejoiced at the interruption; and, having thus ſpoken my ſentiments freely, ideas of a far different nature took poſſeſſion of my mind. But, though Railton converſed with my father on indifferent topics, I could plainly perceive his mind ſtill brooded over our previous diſcourſe; and the pique and reſentment he had conceived againſt me, was ſtrongly marked in his aſpect—where a deep and ſplenetic gloom had ſuperſeded mantling ſmiles and ſelf-ſufficient vivacity.

The thought of having humbled his arrogance gave me pleaſure at the time; but I ſoon experienced how dangerous

it

it is to offend the pride or vanity of a mean mind. Prudence ſhould have taught me to have ſilenced him, by ſhowing dignity, without ſuffering diſguſt to appear. But I was incapable, at the moment, of making reflections; I was hurt at his pretenſions; and my recent diſappointments had perhaps given a degree of aſperity to my temper, which was not habitual to it.—Above all, I had been beloved by the generous, the noble, the all-elegant Lord Henry C——! and I felt as if an indignity had been offered to him, that a being ſo inſignificant as Railton ſhould hope to obtain that heart, that hand, he had thought worth ſuing for with all the tender and ardent ſupplication of impaſſioned humility.

CHAP.

## CHAP. V.

IT was late in the evening, I think, of the 9th or 10th day after this incident, that I received the following note from my father, who had not been at home ſince dinner:—

"Dear Emmy,

"I ſhall not come home to-night;—I am now in confinement at ——, for a debt which I have owed a long time, but which I never expected to have been troubled for, (and dare ſay never ſhould, as my creditor knew I had it not in my power to pay him) had not ſome malicious perſon told him, that you have ſome little property, which they ſuppoſe you would rather part with,

than ſee me in a priſon. It will be uſeleſs for you to come to-night, if you ſhould be diſpoſed to do ſo;—but in the morning, as early as poſſible, I ſhall be glad to ſee you. I rather ſuſpect Railton to be the perſon who gave the hint; for no one elſe of my acquaintance knows any thing about you. I could not have thought he had been ſo mean a wretch—but don't be more uneaſy than you can help, child:—Keep up your ſpirits.—I am,

Your affectionate father,

CHARLES HAMPDEN."

The contents of this letter almoſt petrified me with ſurprize. The little property he alluded to was a ſmall diamond ring, and a pair of bracelets, with the pictures of my firſt friends, ſet with jewels, which had been preſented to me by Mrs. G—; and a watch given me by my honoured friend, her departed huſband. The meanneſs of Railton

did not, I own, much aſtoniſh me, as my ideas of his generoſity were by no means exalted; but I now felt the injury I had done myſelf, by giving way to the warmth of my temper, and ſhewing the contempt in which I held him. Yet, notwithſtanding I ſaw I ſhould inevitably ſuffer for it, my ſpirit would not permit me to *regret* the diſdain I had diſplayed.

I did not heſitate a moment in determining to ſacrifice my little ornaments to relieve a parent's neceſſities, if I could not compleat his enlargement without; but, I own, I wiſhed to deviſe a plan of placing them in the hands of ſome perſon, from whence I might, if I ſhould have it in my power, redeem them. But this could not be done by any but a friend; for the value of the diamonds did not amount to more than the ſum required; therefore, what I could have obtained by depoſit-

ing them with a pawn-broker, would not anſwer the purpoſe.

I knew no one in London, except the Blackwells, with whom I lived on a footing of intimacy ſufficient to authorize my aſking ſuch an inſtance of friendſhip; and their late behaviour did not much encourage me to make a propoſition of that kind to them.

Whilſt ruminating in this manner, I took the diamonds out of a ſmall caſket: the pictures of the tender friends of my childhood and youth, produced on an occaſion ſo affecting, rouſed a thouſand recollections ſo painful, that I burſt into a paſſion of tears as I ſtood looking upon them; and the deſire increaſed, ſome way or other to prevent my loſing for ever thoſe proofs of the tenderneſs and affection once felt for me by thoſe who beſtowed them.

As the wiſh of retaining them ſtrengthened, I inſenſibly felt my diſinclination

of

of applying to the Blackwells decreaſe. I wiſhed to find them all they had at firſt profeſſed themſelves; and I permitted my imagination to give way to the deluſion of ſelf-flattery. I endeavoured to perſuade myſelf I had miſconſtrued ſome part of their behaviour, and ſtrove to place all that had appeared unpleaſant in the moſt favourable light; and as to what Railton had ſaid, the contempt I felt for him made me blame myſelf for having liſtened to his ſuggeſtions. In ſhort, my imagination began to impoſe upon my judgment, and had almoſt brought me to believe that I had injured them.

The next morning, as ſoon as it was time to appear abroad, I put the jewels into my pocket, took a coach, and drove to their houſe, determined to give them an opportunity of effectually evincing their ſincerity. After the ſalutation of the morning, Mrs. Blackwell exclaim-

cal, "Dear me, Miſs Hampden, I wonder how you can like riding in a hackney coach this hot weather." This I conceived was a hint that ſhe thought me extravagant:—her manner hurt me, but I was reſolved to think the beſt, and imputed it to the narrowneſs of her education, which might have imbued contracted ideas in a mind naturally liberal.

In a few minutes Mr. Blackwell came into the room, and we entered into converſation; when I had diſcloſed the unfortunate incident which had occurred to my father, Mr. Blackwell, having regarded his wife's countenance with a ſcrutinizing eye, drew his chair three ſteps from me, with a look of coldneſs; whilſt, on the contrary, the features of his wife aſſumed an air of more than common ſatisfaction. The fact was, Blackwell being a man of ſenſe, and deſiring to paſs in the world for a man

man of extreme politeneſs, had acquired a certain perception of delicacy, that made him wiſh to find ſome tolerably plauſible excuſe for refuſing what he imagined I was about to aſk; but the lady, embarraſſed by no feelings of this nature, was eager for the moment of requeſt, that ſhe might mortify by denial, and irritate by impertinence.

Before I had mentioned the favour I had purpoſed to aſk of them, Mr. Blackwell, having ſomewhat recovered from his embarraſſment, exclaimed, with great gravity and elevation of aſpect,—"If you had taken the advice of myſelf and Mr. Railton, and had written a play, Miſs Hampden, and it had ſucceeded, you would have been able to have paid your father's debts, without being obliged to apply to your friends."

"Yes," cried Mrs. Blackwell, "you know that was what *I* always adviſed."

"Yes, my charmingeſt Arachne, ſo you did;—but you are ever giving me ſome new opportunity of complimenting my judgment in the choice of a woman of your exquiſite foreſight, and amiable diſpoſition."

"I do not think myſelf culpable," ſaid I, "in not attempting a ſpecies of compoſition, for which I thought my talents unadapted; eſpecially as Lady Melmoth had kindly offered her aſſiſtance in obtaining me a ſituation, as private governeſs to a young lady, or ſomething of that nature. Beſides, had I even, as you and Mr. Railton ſuggeſted, written a play, it is not very probable, that a writer unknown, and unhackneyed in theatrical *manœuvres*, ſhould have much chance of procuring its repreſentation."

"Oh dear!" ſaid Mrs. Blackwell, with a ſneer, "our friend Mr. Railton thought it would be no difficult matter.

But

But it is no buſineſs of ours; I'm ſure, my dear Mr. Blackwell and I only mentioned it for your good; we don't covet the trouble of intereſting ourſelves in other people's affairs;—when we do, it is entirely out of friendſhip!

From theſe ſort of ſpeeches I diſcovered, that all I had to ſay in my own defence would be treated with diſregard, as they ſeemed poſſeſſed with the idea that I was come to borrow money, and were reſolved to pretend to ſee my conduct in a falſe point of view, in order to gain an excuſe for affronting me.

Highly mortified at this ſuppoſition, I determined to let them know I did not wiſh them to run any hazard in ſerving me; and therefore produced the jewels, and told the favour I called to requeſt.

Mrs. Blackwell no ſooner heard that I was going to part with thoſe ornaments, than a gleam of added ſatisfac-

tion illumined her features. Not ſo her huſband's;—for, putting on a ſolemn look of compaſſion, he ſaid,—"I am very ſorry it is not in our power to comply with this requeſt; but we have lately put all our money into the funds, and it would be extremely inconvenient at this time to ſerve you in that way."—He was going on with excuſes of this nature, but was ſtopped by his wife—

"It does not ſignify making apologies, love," ſaid ſhe; "we may as well tell Miſs Hampden the truth at once, as we are her friends. I own, I think it would be of little ſervice to lend her money upon her jewels, as in all probability it may be a conſiderable time before ſhe will be able to redeem them; and I dare ſay ſhe will not find any one elſe more ready to lend the full value upon them; therefore I think it would be beſt to ſell them outright. And I am ſure, for my *own* part, *I* ſhould not feel

feel any reluctance at all in parting with a few baubles, if *my father*, or *you*, my dear Mr. Blackwell, were in diſtreſs."

"No, that I am ſure you would not, my ſweeteſt Arachne; but you are an exalted creature, and deſpiſe the idle vanities of your ſex."

I replied, with a good deal of ſpirit, that I had no deſire to preſerve theſe trifles at the expence of a parent's ſufferings; but I thought there was nothing unnatural or blameable in the wiſh ſo to ſecure theſe little preſents (from thoſe who had been the tender guardians of my early youth) that I might regain them if fortune ſhould again ſmile upon me.

"Now I think of it," cried Mrs. Blackwell, "I wonder you don't apply to your friend in the country; I ſuppoſe if you parted upon good terms,

ſhe would be likely to ſerve you in this exigence."

"Very true, my Arachne," ſaid Mr. Blackwell.

Mrs. Blackwell's ſpeech was pointed with ſo peculiar an emphaſis, that I knew it was meant to draw ſomething from me; but as I had told her nothing reſpecting Lord Henry before, I diſdained at that moment to enter into a detail; and therefore I only anſwered, "I have ſome reaſons for not wiſhing to apply to Mrs. G—," and left her to make what comments ſhe pleaſed on the matter.

"Oh, I recollect," cried ſhe, "that you once told me ſomething about her marriage with Colonel Herbert; but I ſhould think that could make no difference with regard to your borrowing a little money of her."

Here ſhe pauſed; and before I could reply, ſhe exclaimed:

"Oh dear, Mr. Blackwell, do you know that I ſaw our neighbour, Miſs Harford, go out in a coach the other day, with that elegant young man that's always dangling after her;—They ſay he is a young gentleman of great family and great expectations; I think it is vaſtly imprudent (to ſay no worſe) for a girl like her, who has no fortune, to be ſeen with him ſo often.—I have no doubt it is without the knowledge of his friends; but one comfort is, no good ever comes of thoſe ſort of connections.—I would not be ſevere, but I think things look very black.—And I am of opinion I ought to *drop* her acquaintance. Eh, love? don't you think ſo?"

"You are perfectly right, my ſweeteſt Arachne," returned Blackwell; "one ſhould

ſhould never countenance things of that nature; by aſſociating with bad people one unavoidably gives a ſanction to wrong. I own I think with you, that ſhe muſt be an artful woman, who wants to draw in the young man to marry her, or perhaps worſe; and I would not wiſh your angelic purity to mix with ſuch droſs."

"Oh dear, yes," cried ſhe, "ſuch women are the vileſt creatures in the world. That's what makes me not like to keep company with her, for I dare ſay ſhe does not ſcruple to behave in a very indelicate way, to induce him to run after her ſo.—People of that artful nature don't ſtick at any thing, you know, to accompliſh their deſigns. Yes, I think it will be quite proper that I ſhould *drop* Miſs Harford—yes, I am determined upon it. I am ſure I hope our poor dear little daughter, when ſhe returns from boarding-ſchool,

ing-ſchool, will have nothing of that turn of conduct; for if ſhe ſhould, it would be the death of me."

"Oh, certainly it would, my deareſt Arachne: but we have nothing to fear on that point; ſhe is in her diſpoſition too like her amiable mother to have any of thoſe ſort of foibles;—beſides, ſhe has not that ſort of phyſiognomy; ſhe has too much of the fine, mild, meek, delicate profile of my Arachne.—Oh, ſhe can never err, my Arachne, after the education you have given her."

This dialogue was uttered with many very pointed looks; and I could plainly perceive ſhe had been at no ſmall pains to *tranſpoſe* the ſtory of *Miſs Harford*, in order, as ſhe thought, to adapt it more particularly to my caſe. And it occurred to me, that the ſame deſpicable wretch, who was capable

pable of the meanneſs I have mentioned, with reſpect to the arreſt, had likewiſe been baſe enough to attempt to ſtab my character by relating facts myſteriouſly, and propagating blackening ſurmiſes. You will now call to mind, my dear Miſs Mordaunt, the circumſtance of Railton's finding Lord Henry alone with me at my father's, and perceive the malicious handle he had made of that incident, by giving ſo invaluable an opportunity to an envious woman of traducing my character.

I was now in a ſituation of all others the moſt cruel, that of being talked *to* in an *allegory*; I fired inwardly at the calumny, and yet knew not how, and indeed diſdained to begin to exculpate myſelf: from this painful ſtate I could no way relieve myſelf but by departing; and I accordingly

cordingly roſe to do ſo. Upon which Mr. Blackwell muttered out ſomething about being ſorry it was not in his power to accommodate me; and his wife very aſſiduouſly, and with a great affectation of kindneſs, wrote me a direction to a jeweller of her acquaintance, whom ſhe recommended as the propereſt perſon in the world to purchaſe my trinkets.—I put it into my pocket-book, and with an indignant reſerve, made my parting compliments, and withdrew in a manner that plainly told them they need not fear a repetition of my viſits. Indeed it was high time (to uſe her own elegant expreſſion) that I ſhould be *dropped*, as I had fully anſwered the purpoſes of theſe *friends of genius*.—I had been exhibited to their acquaintance—they had by that means added to their reputation of a fondneſs for encouraging talents; and

and had picked out *ſeeming* faults enough in my conduct to juſtify their refuſing to aſſiſt me when I moſt needed the hand of friendſhip.

## CHAP. VI.

I WENT immediately to the jeweller's — and, not to trouble you with the intermediate particulars, my father was relieved from his confinement that morning. As ſoon as this buſineſs was tranſacted, I ordered the coachman to drive to Lady Melmoth's; but, to my extreme mortification, I learnt from the ſervant who opened the door, that her ladyſhip was gone a little way out of town, and that

that they knew not exactly when ſhe would return. The ſtate of apprehenſion I was then in, led me to conclude I had been miſrepreſented to Lady M——, and that her doors were ſhut againſt me; moſt ſenſibly did that affect me; I determined immediately to write to her, but I was prevented; my health had been for ſome time before in a very weak condition, and the fatigue and anxiety I had gone through this day, ſo greatly overpowered my conſtitution, that I was ſeized in the evening with a fever, which continued a fortnight; in another week however I was able to walk about the room, tho' ſtill weak and much emaciated; and my ſpirits ſunk to the loweſt ebb of dejection.

To all hope of happineſs I had long bade adieu; an ill-ſtarred paſſion had opened a ſpring of ſorrow in my breaſt, which I too ſtrongly felt would never

eaſe

ceaſe to flow. But I now ſaw myſelf reduced to a ſtate that inſpired the moſt deſpairing reflections. Calumny and caprice had torn from me every friend who had the power of ſerving me, and left me ſick, helpleſs, deſtitute, and forlorn.

One evening, whilſt ideas like theſe wholly engroſſed my mind, I received another letter from my father, informing me that he was again arreſted; but, as he knew I had nothing left but my cloaths, he did not expect or wiſh I ſhould attempt to relieve him by any means but that of borrowing from a friend, which he feared I ſhould not be able to do.

The woman who attended me was from home when I received this letter, which had ſo violent an effect on my debilitated ſpirits that I fainted away. How long I continued inſenſible I know not, but when I awoke from this tranſient

tranſient death, I found myſelf ſtill alone; and the firſt uſe I made of ſpeech was to vent the bittereſt agonies of grief; my reaſon began to forſake me, and my truſt in Providence gave way to the moſt piercing deſpair. From the indulgence of theſe emotions I was recalled by the cries of one in extreme pain, and on liſtening diſcovered them to proceed from an apartment over my head; as the noiſe increaſed, I concluded the perſon to be in need of aſſiſtance, and, loſing for the moment my ſorrows and my weakneſs in my ſympathetic feelings, I flew up ſtairs with the celerity of a perſon in full health. On entering the room I found a woman ſtretched on a bed in great agony, and alone: having rendered her what aſſiſtance it was in my power to give, ſhe after ſome little time grew better, and related to me the cauſe of her pain, which proceeded from

from a wound occaſioned by her having had, ſome years before, a fractured limb very unſkilfully ſet. She had had every aid that ſurgery could give to remedy the ill, but the wound was deemed incurable, and the only relief ſhe could obtain from the torment it ſometimes gave her, was derived from the uſe of laudanum; ſaying this, ſhe requeſted me to give her a ſmall box from the chimney-piece, from which ſhe took a large pill and ſwallowed it.

The ſight of another gloomy ſhade in the picture of human life did not leſſen my melancholy, or cauſe me to look with leſs horror on my own ſituation:—"Alas! unhappy being," thought I, "in thy lot I ſee my own deſtiny, ſickneſs and poverty!"—At that moment (I ſhudder to relate it) the idea of ſelf-deſtruction preſented itſelf to my mind as my only reſource againſt

againſt a life of miſery.—Affecting an unintereſted tone, I aſked her what quantity would eaſe one's pain for ever; ſhe broke off a very ſmall piece, and replied—"THAT would be ſufficient for a perſon who had not been enured by degrees to taking opiates."

I trembled as ſhe laid it in the palm of my hand, and yet reſolved to ſecure it; having watched her eyes therefore till I ſaw them bent in a contrary direction, I cloſed the box and replaced it on the ſhelf, pretending to have put the broken piece of opium into it, and preſently deſcended to my own apartment, determined to execute my purpoſe before any one returned; a petrifying chill crept through every vein, yet my reſolution forſook me not: I advanced ſlowly into the middle of my own room; when a ſudden dimneſs ſhaded my eyes, a dark miſt hovered round me, I had no longer the ſmalleſt

diſcernment

diſcernment of objects; I leant againſt the back of a chair; in two minutes a hand appeared to penetrate through the ſurrounding gloom, as if extended to ſnatch from me the deathful opiate. At ſight of this viſion the fatal drug fell from my nerveleſs hand; I ſtarted back appalled; the ſide of my head daſhed againſt the chimney-piece with ſo violent a concuſſion, that in endeavouring to reach a chair, my ſtrength failed me, and I fell on the floor. All power of reflection was for ſome minutes ſuſpended; but its return brought to my heart an aweful penitence for the crime I had been about to commit; and tears of ſincere remorſe rolled down my cheeks, whilſt I offered up my grateful and ardent acknowledgments for the deliverance I had experienced, and prayed to be endowed with a ſpirit of reſignation to the will of infinite wiſdom!

CHAP.

## CHAP. VII.

WHILST I was thus engaged, I heard a carriage ſtop at the door, and preſently feet aſcending the ſtair-caſe: as I expected no one, I concluded it was ſomebody going to the other lodger. Judge my ſurprize when the door opened and Lady Melmoth entered!—She ſtood a moment petrified with amazement;—ſhocking indeed muſt have been the ſpectacle I then preſented!—I was ſtill on the floor, the back of my head ſupported againſt the arm of a chair; I had on a long white morning dreſs negligently pinned, my cap had fallen off, and my hair unpowdered hung looſely over my pale haggard countenance, rendered to appearance yet more ghaſtly by the

blood which had flowed from the wound on my temple.

I thought, at the firſt entrance of Lady Melmoth, I beheld a ſecond viſion; but it inſpired nothing of fear. I roſe from the ground, and would have advanced to try the reality of what I ſaw; but ſhe moved quickly towards me, her features relaxing into an expreſſion of benignity, though they ſtill retained ſomewhat of their former impreſſion of terror. She led me to a ſeat; and then placing herſelf beſide me, cried, with the voice of heart-ſoothing tenderneſs,—"Tell me, my dear Miſs Hampden! tell me, my ſweet young friend!—what has cauſed the appearance of horror and diſtraction I behold?"

I made no reply—my heart was too full for utterance. I ſeized both her hands; I preſſed them eagerly to my lips, and to my heart—bathing them with the faſt-flowing tears, which na-

ture, to ſave my heart from burſting in that moment of ſwelling gratitude, kindly lent me.

At length articulation was given me, and I exclaimed, kneeling at her feet—

"Oh you! my all! my guardian angel! my deliverer from more than *death*—from *perdition!*—for ſure 'twas your hand which ſnatched from my lips the poiſonous drug!"—Here, exhauſted by the violence of my emotions, I ceaſed ſpeaking; and, nearly ſuffocated with convulſive ſighs, dropped my weary head upon her lap. Lady Melmoth gazed on me with the moſt eager anxiety. She ſuppoſed me bereft of ſenſe: the tear of terror and commiſeration trembled in her eye. She raiſed me from the ground, placed me in a chair, and laying my face on her boſom, —"Compoſe yourſelf, my ſweet girl," cried ſhe; "and then tell me what has happened, to inſpire the extreme afflic-

tion in which I find you; and if I can remove or alleviate it, tax my power to the utmoſt."

I lifted up my head;—I fixed my grateful eyes ardently on her lovely aſpect. I opened my lips with the intention of pouring my ſorrows into the ſoft conſolatory boſom of friendſhip.—But ſhe prevented me. Perceiving her handkerchief ſtained with the blood from my temple, ſhe haſtily exclaimed,—"Firſt let me ſend for ſome aſſiſtance." I replied, it was only a ſlight wound, that occaſioned little pain, and would ſoon heal of itſelf; and begged her not to ſend for any body: but, diſregarding me, ſhe ran to the top of the ſtairs, and calling her footman, ordered him to fetch the firſt ſurgeon he could meet with.

On her ladyſhip's return, I related, as ſuccinctly as poſſible, every thing that had occurred to me ſince the time I firſt

ſaw

ſaw Lord Henry. She liſtened to me with the moſt profound and friendly attention; an attention like yours, my ſweet friend, only interrupted by ſighs, tears, and expreſſions of deteſtation and abhorrence of the duplicity and meanneſs I had experienced, under the ſacred title of friendſhip. I concealed not from her the ſallies of a too impetuous temper; but related every incident with the ſame candor I would have confeſſed it to the great Author of my exiſtence!

There is an ingenuous freedom in the language of truth, which ſeldom fails to impreſs the unprejudiced auditor.

I experienced the juſtneſs of this remark in the behaviour of Lady Melmoth. She ſoothed my agitated heart, by praiſing, with tender warmth, many parts of my conduct; and, whatever had been my errors, ſhe ſeemed fully convinced, they were not of the nature or magnitude they had been repreſented

to her. She owned that Mrs. Blackwell had endeavoured to injure me in her good opinion, in a very eſſential point of conduct; but ſhe obſerved,—"Malice could never effectually be concealed, but by thoſe who united an acute underſtanding to a wily ſpirit; and was ſure to deſtroy its own intentions, in perſons of groveling intellects."

Here we were interrupted by the arrival of a ſurgeon, who having examined, and applied a ſlight dreſſing to my wound, pronounced that in two or three days it would be completely healed—and retired.

As ſoon as he had left us, I began to expreſs, in the ſtrong terms my gratitude prompted, the ſenſe I had of her ladyſhip's generoſity, in viſiting me to know the truth or falſhood of what ſhe had heard; but ſhe would not ſuffer me to proceed—

"You owe me nothing," ſaid her ladyſhip;

ladyſhip; "I have barely done you juſtice. Such is the frail ſtate of humanity, that ſelf-intereſt or perſonal pique too frequently warps ſpirits of great native liberality, and leads them to judge with too much ſeverity of the conduct of others. But where no ſuch motive actuates, the mind muſt be corrupt indeed, that can take a tale of ſcandal upon truſt, which the general conduct, ſentiments, and manners of the object aſperſed, contradict. And ſuch a mind muſt mine have been, had I acted differently towards Miſs Hampden.—And now, my young friend, permit me to give you a ſmall proof of the friendſhip I profeſs—let me be ſo happy as to make your mind eaſy on your father's account." Thus ſweetly interrogated, I told her ladyſhip the amount of the debt for which he was confined. She thanked me for the information; and with a look, which you who know her

aſpect may imagine, replied—"You ſhall hear from me when I get home."

I could make no verbal anſwer to expreſſions ſo ſoothing, and ſentiments ſo generous; I ſnatched her hand, and raiſed it to my lips and my heart, with looks and ſenſations that it is not in language to deſcribe.

CHAP.

## CHAP. VIII.

LADY Melmoth had perceived from my narrative, that the idea of ſuffering in her eſtimation, had been to me a ſource of the moſt poignant uneaſineſs; and ſhe was fearful the confirmation ſhe had given me, that efforts had not been wanting to effect that purpoſe, ſhould, by irritating my feelings, retard my recovery. On this account, ſhe ſaid every thing to calm my mind, that the mildeſt ſpirit of benevolence, and the nobleſt principles of religion could inſpire. But her admonitions were unneceſſary at that criſis; my heart was too much ſoftened by the benefit the Blackwells had (though undeſignedly) done me, in occaſioning

Lady Melmoth's viſit, to retain any violent emotions of reſentment againſt them.

She ſeemed pleaſed when I gave her this information; and riſing to take her leave,—"Adieu, my love, adieu," cried ſhe.

"I am happy to leave you in a frame of mind ſo comfortable, as well as proper;—I will ſee you again very ſoon; in the mean time, don't neglect to take care of your health; I hope to have the happineſs of finding it much reſtored when I viſit you again." Here, with a look of ſmiling benignity, ſhe withdrew;—and in about an hour after ſhe had left me, I received from her a very polite and affectionate note, containing a bill of double the value of the ſum I had mentioned; and the pleaſing intelligence, that ſhe meant to viſit me on the morning of the next day.

At the appointed time ſhe came.

Her

Her ladyſhip told me, that a relation, who had lived with her as her domeſtic friend and companion ſince the death of Sir Robert Melmoth, had lately married; and that it was this friend ſhe was viſiting when I called at her houſe ſome weeks before.

Lady Melmoth then made me an offer of reſiding with her, upon the moſt delicate, friendly, and liberal terms; which I need not tell you I accepted with grateful avidity.

The third day of my reſidence with her ladyſhip, when I retired to dreſs for a viſit I was to make with her that evening, I found in one of my dreſſing boxes, the diamond ring, bracelets, &c. I had diſpoſed of to the jeweller, who was the ſame perſon her ladyſhip always uſed.

I could not return her my thanks for this delicate inſtance of generous attention, without tears.

"Do not, my dear Miſs Hampden," ſaid ſhe, "think ſo highly of a little ſervice rendered to you without difficulty to myſelf. Theſe little ornaments were formerly valuable to you, as being the endeared gifts of friendly affection; you will now view them, I am ſure, with added pleaſure, as having been the means of aiding a parent's neceſſities."

But here her benevolence did not end;—through the intereſt of ſome part of her ladyſhip's family, with men in power, my father obtained an employment under government, ſufficiently lucrative to procure him the conveniences and comforts of life to which he had been accuſtomed.

My mind ſet at reſt on this ſubject, the life I lead with this admirable woman is, of all others, that I could moſt wiſh—calm, tranquil—yet agreeably diverſified by intelligent ſociety and

and rational amuſement. And, were it not for ſome painful recollections, I ſhould perhaps enjoy as large a portion of happineſs as this ſtate of being admits of.—But, alas! what can a calm produce to thoſe whoſe hopes are ſhipwrecked!

Here Miſs Hampden ended her narrative; and it being near their uſual hour of breakfaſting, the ladies roſe, and dreſſed to join the family.

CHAP.

## CHAP. IX.

DURING the sightly excursion we have recorded, Maria had chanced to drop, unknowingly, the letter she had written to Dr. Edgeware. This letter Lord Newry, as he passed through the gallery the next morning, picked up, and (it being unsealed) immediately gratified his curiosity by perusing it. From some expressions contained in it, his lordship learnt, what he knew not before, that the situation of our fair heroine was wholly a dependent one; and this knowledge revived hopes, which, whilst he imagined her a woman of fortune, her manner of receiving his assiduities had damped. As Lord Newry

Newry had always *pretended* the moſt honourable attachment, he *now* believed her reſerve to be merely aſſumed, and reſolved to renew his ſuit with redoubled ardour; thinking the hope of poſſeſſing a coronet, (united with attractions like his) was enough to turn the head and enchant the heart of the wiſeſt woman in the world, in her circumſtances.

Maria did not diſcover her loſs till juſt before ſhe deſcended the next morning; and happening to enter the breakfaſt-room unaccompanied, ſhe found Lord Newry alone, indulging the ideas I have been deſcribing. She eagerly inquired if, in returning to his own apartment, he had found a letter ſhe had dropped the night before, directed to Dr. Edgeware.

"No, upon my ſoul, Madam," replied his lordſhip—not chooſing ſhe ſhould know he had found the letter, left

leſt ſhe ſhould ſuſpect his knowledge of her affairs, and guard againſt his deſigns—" No, upon my ſoul, Madam, I ſaw nothing of it; perhaps Mr. Aubrey might.—I hope our ſtrange adventure did not prevent your ſleeping the remainder of the night.—That raſcal deſerved to have been kicked down ſtairs; if he had been my ſervant, I ſhould have made him inſtantly ſtrip, and walk out of doors; or, perhaps, have ſtabbed him on the ſpot for the impertinence of his ridiculous frolic. But, I hope you got a little ſleep—indeed I could almoſt venture to ſwear you did, by the brightneſs of your eyes, and the radiancy of your complexion."

" Indeed your lordſhip is miſtaken," ſaid Maria; " for when I got to my own chamber, I ſpent ſome time in relating our adventure to Miſs Hampden; and when I had ended, the morning

ing was ſo far advanced, that neither of us felt any inclination to ſleep; and we converſed on different topics till we roſe."

"I confeſs," returned Lord Newry, "I could take no reſt myſelf; but from a cauſe very different from yours; —it was not the fatigue of talking that deprived me of repoſe."

"True, my Lord," anſwered Maria, in a raillying tone; "*terror* is a very quiet ſenſation, and I conjecture you had not entirely overcome yours."

"Ah no, my lovely girl!" ſaid he; "it was not *fear*, but *certainty*, that robbed me of ſleep;—'twas the touch of that beauteous cheek which fired my ſoul, and kept me waking!"

"You take very unbecoming liberties, my Lord, both in your converſation and behaviour," ſaid Maria, — bluſhing at the boldneſs of his looks, and walking to the window.

"Forgive

"Forgive me, my charming creature! I proteſt to heaven I would not deſignedly diſpleaſe you for the world's wealth; you are the only woman I ever loved!—Do not kill me with your frowns!—Have ſome pity on the miſerable wretch your charms have made!"

"You know, my Lord, I have no inclination to liſten to language of this kind;—pray do not attempt to detain me," ſaid ſhe, going to leave the room.

"Stay, ſtay, my enchanting Miſs Mordaunt! I intreat you to hear me! let me ſtrive to melt your heart to compaſſion."

"I told your Lordſhip in a former converſation, that I ſhould eſteem myſelf indebted to your generoſity if you would deſiſt from importunities, which as I can make no return to your paſſion, are extremely irkſome to me. And ſure

ſure I am, my Lord, if you were really under the influence of an honourable attachment, you would ſuffer in ſilence rather than act contrary to my deſire."

As ſhe uttered theſe words, ſhe ſtrove to get from him, in order to leave the room; but, ſtill on his knees, he held her hands in his, imprinting them with his lips; and at the inſtant Aubrey opened the door. Maria, with a look of wildneſs, ſnatched her hand from Lord Newry, her neck and face covered with bluſhes of embarraſſment and vexation. Aubrey, not much leſs diſconcerted, darted a piercing look of ſurprize mixed with reproach at Maria, and pronouncing in an heſitating tone, "I beg your pardon," retired. Maria ſtood a moment motionleſs with confuſion; but ſhe had read plainly in the aſpect of Aubrey that he thought ſhe encouraged the addreſſes of Lord Newry; and, earneſtly wiſhing to undeceive him,

him, involuntarily exclaimed (breaking from his lordſhip who ſtill aimed to detain her, and running to the door) "Stay, ſtay, Mr. Aubrey;" but he heard her not, and paſſed into the garden.—Provoked to an extreme degree, ſhe now turned her head towards Lord Newry, uttering, with the emphaſis of wounded ſenſibility, "How I deteſt you, my Lord!" and quitted the room; into which ſhe did not return till ſhe was told Lady Melmoth and Miſs Hampden were there.

When ſhe re-entered, Lord Newry was giving her Ladyſhip, in his uſual ſtile, a very mirthful account of the tranſaction of the preceding night.

"Oh, I am glad you are come, my dear Miſs Mordaunt," cried her Ladyſhip, "my Lord's ſtories are generally ſo profuſely adorned, that we are ſcarcely ever able to diſtinguiſh reality from ornament; be ſo kind, therefore, fair

fair heroine of the adventure, as to inform us whether your night excurſion was really as Quixotic as his Lordſhip has deſcribed it."

Maria, placing herſelf in a window, near which Lady Melmoth ſat, began to enter into a faithful relation of the whole tranſaction; and, whilſt ſhe was ſo doing, Lord Newry, notwithſtanding a very ſevere look ſhe darted at him, ſqueezed himſelf into the window-ſeat beſide her.

His Lordſhip underwent a good deal of raillery from Lady Melmoth and Miſs Hampden; for Maria did not neglect to put his terror in as ludicrous a light as poſſible. He affected to feel great confuſion at being placed in ſo laughable a point of view; and as ſhe purſued her narrative, under pretence of intreating her to ſpare him, he again detained one of her hands, notwithſtanding all her oppoſition.

tion. Whilſt he was thus amuſing himſelf, to the extreme mortification of Maria, Aubrey came in; the firſt object that met his ſight was Lord Newry ſeated cloſe beſide Maria, holding her hand familiarly in his. He turned his eyes towards her, but quickly withdrawing them, made a paſſing bow to the company, and moved to a ſeat on the oppoſite ſide the room. Hurt and confuſed, it was ſome minutes before our heroine ventured to mark his countenance, and when ſhe did, it was with a trembling eye and aching heart. But jealouſy had ſeized on the ſpirit of Aubrey, and he returned a reproachful glance, in which Maria diſcovered, or thought ſhe diſcovered, a mortifying mixture of contempt.

"Alas!" thought ſhe, "I lamented that he had too plainly ſeen the ſoftneſs of my ſoul;—but he now thinks

thinks me light, trifling, and changeful!"

Wrung to the heart by this reflection, ſhe determined to ſeize the firſt opportunity of undeceiving him reſpecting the deteſted Lord Newry. Engroſſed by this reſolution, and revolving in her mind different ways of introducing the ſubject when an opportunity ſhould preſent itſelf, ſhe uttered little during breakfaſt; after which, Lady Melmoth taking up a book, aſked her friends if ſhe ſhould read to them Mr. Hayley's tragedy of *Marcella*; Maria and Miſs Hampden thanked her for the propoſition.

"*I* ſhall be particularly obliged to your Ladyſhip," ſaid Aubrey, "for it was this play which kept me from my pillow laſt night. I had juſt ended the ſecond act, when Miſs Mordaunt's exclamation of terror reached my ears; and I am impatient to learn the cataſtrophe

ſtrophe of a piece which had ſo powerfully ſeized on my feelings."

"I do not wonder," returned Miſs Hampden, "Mr. Aubrey gave up a part of his reſt to the pleaſure of peruſing a tragedy, in which the author has emulated, with claſſical ſpirit and true poetic enthuſiaſm, the melting pathos and the ſublime horrors of the Greek drama."

Lady Melmoth had ſcarcely finiſhed reading, when the rattling of a carriage in the court-yard announced the arrival of a viſitor, who came juſt in time to diſſipate, like a farcical after-piece, the melancholy impreſſion of the foregoing repreſentation.

Lord Newry (who in compliment to the ladies had pretended to be extremely affected whilſt Lady Melmoth recited) ſeemed not very much diſpleaſed with this interruption of ſighs and tears; and,

and, looking out of the window, exclaimed,

"Pray, ladies, who may this ſtrange antediluvian figure, with the three ſunflowers on her cap, be?"

"Oh, it is my old acquaintance, Lady Dowager Davenhill," ſaid Lady Melmoth; "ſhe has ſome little peculiarities in her dreſs and converſation, but her manners are friendly, and ſhe has a very good heart."

"Peculiar enough indeed, my Lady! Why, ſhe carries a foreſt of trees upon her gown;—I verily believe your Ladyſhip's fan would not be large enough to cover one of the green leaves of that great oak which is ſprouting upon her back."

"My dear Lady Melmoth!" exclaimed Lady Davenhill, entering habited in a ſtile that would have been exquiſitely faſhionable about twenty years before, "my dear Lady Mel-

moth! I beg your pardon that I have not been here before this time; and that I did not return your Ladyſhip's laſt viſit before I left town. A ſucceſſion of the ſtrangeſt circumſtances prevented me, that you can conceive.—One morning I was abſolutely on my way to you, and was ſtopped; this was the laſt day but one I was in town;—I had determined to walk (you know what an excellent walker I am) when who ſhould I meet in croſſing the ſquare but Lady Hilford's little grandſon (her Ladyſhip brought the child to ſee me one day, knowing how fond I am of children) ſo I knew the little thing again immediately, and I took it from the ſervant who was leading it by the hand (for it runs very prettily) and I almoſt ſmothered it with kiſſes.—A mighty fine child indeed!—Well; ſo this put me in mind of Mrs. Scott, who, your ladyſhip

ſhip knows, is ſiſter to the gentleman that Lady Hilford's third daughter married—a very excellent woman! and ſhe has lately loſt a fine little girl; ſo I reſolved to go and make my condolances to the poor diſtreſſed lady; and as it was poſitively a viſit of humanity, I thought your Ladyſhip's goodneſs of heart would excuſe me when I made this apology. And ſo I was telling Mr. What's-his-name, Mr.—Mr.—Mr.—dear me, I am the worſt in the world to remember names. —Your Ladyſhip knows who I mean; that agreeable gentleman we met at Lady Vandal's converſazione — your Ladyſhip knows perfectly the perſon I allude to."

"Upon my honour, Madam," ſaid Lady Melmoth, "I do not recollect."

"No!—don't you?—Mr.—Mr.—dear me! his daughter had a polypus

in her noſe—you muſt certainly recollect now—the circumſtance was much talked of at the time;—Mr. Lancet, the ſurgeon, had a hundred guineas for performing the operation, and ſhe died in three days afterwards.—Oh!—now the name has juſt entered into my head; it was Mr. ELLIS—aye, Mr. Ellis, that was the name.—Well, I told him the affair of my being ſtopped in my way to you; and he was quite of my opinion, that your Ladyſhip would pardon the omiſſion when I informed you of the occaſion."

"Oh, moſt undoubtedly, Madam; though I have loſt much pleaſure in your Ladyſhip's abſence, yet the humane cauſe of the omiſſion is a very ſufficient apology."

"Yes, thoſe are exactly the words Mr. *Ellis* (that's his name) ſaid you would make uſe of when I explained the caſe to your Ladyſhip.—Was you

at

at Lady Squeezum's aſſembly ?—I did not ſee you whilſt I ſtayed there."

"No, Madam, I was not; I had a cold that kept me at home."

"Nor you, Miſs Hampden ?" ſaid Lady Davenhill.

"No, Madam."

"Oh you ſhould have been there! there was the greateſt croud aſſembled I almoſt ever ſaw! her Ladyſhip's rooms were ſo full, one part of the evening, that I believe my delicate lank greyhound Diana could not have entered, even erected upon his hinder feet. It was ſo intenſely hot that every body was expiring; I am heartily ſorry, my dear Miſs Hampden, you were not there; you would have been vaſtly amuſed!"

"Oh, my dear Madam, ſurely your Ladyſhip ought rather to congratulate me upon my abſence, if the heat was

ſo intenſe, and effects ſo dangerous accrued from it," ſaid Miſs H———.

"Oh dear! dear!" cried her Ladyſhip, in an ironical tone, "but the dazzling aſſemblage of company made ample amends for every inconvenience of that ſort:—Lady Squeezum ſeemed to tread air! and indeed ſhe had cauſe; for ſuch innumerable fortunate contingencies had happened to increaſe the fullneſs of her rooms that I believe never before united. One in particular was aſtoniſhingly lucky: Lady Mommet's aſſembly was fixed for the ſame night as Lady Squeezum's; and Lady Squeezum was in dreadful apprehenſions that the company would have been ſo divided that her houſe would not have been above half full; but Sir James Mommet fortunately dying in the interval, Lady Mommet was forced to ſhut her doors, which, with other additional circumſtances, gave ſo delightful

delightful a redundancy to Lady Squeezum's rooms, that ſhe abſolutely could not ſet her feet into them herſelf, but was obliged to ſit upon the ſtair-caſe, like the pew-opener of an over-flowing methodiſt conventicle."

"Well, I confeſs, notwithſtanding the pleaſantry of your Ladyſhip's deſcription," ſaid Maria, "ſo great a crowd ſtill appears to me in the light of a dreadful inconvenience."

"Every one has a peculiarity of taſte," returned her Ladyſhip; "for my part, I own, I like a crowd. I enjoy the variety of characters one ſees."

"Is a crowd the ſituation your Ladyſhip thinks moſt proper for the contemplation of character?" ſaid Miſs Hampden; "I ſhould judge the contrary, I profeſs."

"Oh, I always judge from phyſiognomy, and therefore a multitude affords

me more entertainment than a ſmall group."

"Oh, if your Ladyſhip has a paſſion for crowding and multitudes," ſaid Lord Newry, "I wiſh you had ſeen the crowds that uſed to reſort to my father's ſeat, in Armagh, to celebrate my coming of age. My Lord kept open houſe there for ſeveral months, during which time two conduits placed on each ſide the great door ran continually with claret and whiſky."

"Splendid indeed, my Lord!"

"Oh, Madam, this was trifling in compariſon with the *entertainments* he gave, which were magnificent and profuſe in the extreme;—as an inſtance; there were forty boys every day conſtantly employed in the ſingle article of picking parſley."

"Bleſs me!" ſaid Miſs Hampden, "then, upon a moderate computation,

my

my Lord, it muſt take an army of people to dreſs the dinner compleatly."

"Ah now, my dear Miſs Hampden, you ſeem to think I jeſt; but upon my honour and truth it is true."

"Amazing!" cried Lady Davenhill.

"Dear Madam, this is nothing at all that I have told you.—I ſuppoſe there never was another man in the world that had ſuch a *damned* fine taſte for ſpending money as my father. I have heard him ſay himſelf, that when he was a young fellow, he kept an opera girl in Paris, who uſed to curl her hair every day with bank-bills; and his Lordſhip has often aſſured me, that he himſelf ſupplied her with this kind of curling-paper for nine or ten months conſtantly."

"But I ſhould be apprehenſive that liquor, given in ſuch unbounded quantities as your Lordſhip juſt now ſpoke

of, muſt be productive of dangerous conſequences to the lower claſs of people," ſaid Aubrey.

"Oh no, not at all," returned Lord Newry, no way diſconcerted; "I have ſeen them ſometimes, it is true, lie dead drunk upon the hall floor, fifty or a hundred at a time perhaps; and there they remained till the next morning, when they all got up and walked away as freſh as larks."

"But, my Lord, among ſo great a number of men in a ſtate of inebriety, it is wonderful there were no quarrels, and that riot and blood-ſhed did not enſue."

"Aye, now you ſpeak of riots, Aubrey, I believe ſomething of that kind did happen; for, now I recollect, there might, I fancy, be as many as a dozen men killed in the courſe of the time."

"All this muſt occaſion a number

of profecutions, and cauſe great commotions," ſaid Aubrey.

"Oh no, not in the leaſt, not in the leaſt; we eaſily adjuſt matters of that kind in my country;—our family and ſome others united intereſts; money flew about; the effects of theſe affrays were brought in accidental murder; and the delinquents came off ſcot-free."

"Pray," ſaid Lady Davenhill, "what do you think of the accounts received from Paris, of the experiments made on the air-balloon?"

"All authentic, Madam, all authentic," cried Lord Newry; "I had a letter, the day before I left town, from one of the party (my particular friend) that aſcended in the air-chariot. The letter contained a thouſand things infinitely more ſurprizing than any yet made public, and was attended by a preſent of very fine *potted larks*, which they caught in their aerial tour."

"Will your Lordſhip do us the favour to read that part of the letter which relates the wonderful diſcoveries you mention."

"I would have read it to you all with the greateſt pleaſure in life," replied he, "but the moſt unfortunate accident in the world happened to that letter; as I was reading it at a window, a ſudden blaſt of wind carried it over the oppoſite houſes; and though I ſent my fellow immediately to look for it, the devil a bit of it could he find for the ſoul of him."

"Oh, how diſtreſſing!" cried Lady Davenhill; "how extremely diſtreſſing to loſe ſo valuable a letter!"

"What a vaſt quantity of inflammable air muſt have been infuſed into the letter," ſaid Aubrey, ſmiling, "to cauſe it to aſcend with ſo aſtoniſhing a velocity! But don't you remember any of the *additional* circumſtances, my Lord?"

"No,

"No, faith; I have a very bad memory for things of that kind; but I know there was an amazing number of ſurprizing accounts."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" ſaid Lady Davenhill; "how glad ſhould I have been to have ſeen the letter, that I might have told its contents to my learned and ingenious friend, Dr. Beetlebrain, the great philoſopher, who is to ſup with me to-morrow night. Oh, if I could but procure the Doctor a limb of one of thoſe potted larks, he would think himſelf in heaven whilſt he eat it —for he's an excellent judge of thoſe kind of things."

"I ſhould have been the happieſt fellow in the world to have obliged your ladyſhip and the Doctor with a taſte of them; but unluckily I made a preſent of them, pot and all, the day before I left town."

"Bleſs me; I wonder your lordſhip did

did not keep a part of them for your own eating."

"Oh, I have the greateſt antipathy that your ladyſhip can conceive to potted larks—cou'dn't touch one if it would ſave my life.—So I ſent them all to a particular friend of mine, who is a great epicure, and remarkably fond of them."

"Oh, what a loſs has the poor dear Doctor had!—to be ſure he would have been ſo happy to have partaken of the balloon larks! By the way, (looking in the glaſs) I think my *balloon* cap does not ſit quite the thing to-day;—it is the firſt cap I have had made in the modern taſte for twenty years. Are not my flowers placed awry, ladies? I believe I am dreſſed in an odd ſort of manner;—quite a ſtrange object,—am I not?"—turning to Aubrey, who ſtood beſide her.

"I confeſs, I have ſeen your ladyſhip better dreſſed."

"That's

"That's truth, Mr. Aubrey; I like your frankneſs," replied Lady Davenhill, in perfect good humour; "but, I beg your pardon; I ought to have thought of it before:—Pray—I hope Mrs. Aubrey has perfectly recovered the ſhock of the terrible accident ſhe met with at Bath? I aſſure you, a great many people laughed at the affair, and called it ridiculous; but, for my part, I know ſo well what people that have weak nerves ſuffer, that I defended her to every body that ſpoke to me of the circumſtance; and ſaid, I did not ſee the thing in half ſo ludicrous a light as they did. Poor lady! I'm ſure, though I have not the honour of knowing her, I ſincerely pitied her; and I hope ſhe has entirely recovered the fright. And the poor little dog too"—

"Oh yes; perfectly recovered, Madam," ſaid he; moving to the other end of the room.

"What

"What was the accident her ladyſhip alludes to, Aubrey?" aſked Lord Newry; who had perceived, from his manner, that he had only feigned a knowledge of the occurrence, to prevent the recital of a long ridiculous ſtory.—"What was the accident her ladyſhip alludes to?"

"Oh, a trifling affair," anſwered he, "not worth relating,"

[Maria, who, before this ſubject was ſtarted, had been ſufficiently tired of liſtening to converſation, which, in the perturbed ſtate of her mind, yielded no ſort of amuſement, now quitted the room.]

"No, ſurely, it was not a *trifling* affair," ſaid Lady Davenhill, who had overheard what Aubrey had ſaid to Lord Newry; "it might have had very dangerous conſequences."

"Pray, what might this accident be, my Lady?" aſked Lord Newry, aſ-

ſuming

ſuming a look of great compaſſion and ſympathy, in order to draw out the ſtory. "Poor Mrs. Aubrey! I feel myſelf much intereſted about her;—be kind enough to tell the particulars,"

"Certainly, my Lord; but I can only tell your lordſhip the affair as I *heard* it, for, as I ſaid before, I have not the honour of knowing the lady. The thing was this—"

Here Aubrey, unobſerved by her ladyſhip, who was wholly engroſſed by the pleaſure of telling the incident of Mrs. Aubrey, went out at a door that opened upon the terrace, and ſtrolled towards his favourite walk.

CHAP.

## CHAP. X.

MARIA, on leaving the parlour, had gone immediately to her own apartment, where leaning on the edge of the window, ſhe fell into a deep and painful meditation on her own ſituation.

"Alas!" cried ſhe mentally, "even you, my dear Miſs Hampden, are happy in compariſon with others; the intenſeneſs of your affliction, time may mellow into a ſoft, though mournful remembrance; and thoſe fond recollections, and tender regrets, which virtue forbids not, may be numbered among the ſweeteſt pleaſures of a ſuſceptible heart. But ſure it is miſery in the abſtract, to be continually ſtruggling

gling to extirpate from the breaſt a paſſion, which reaſon and duty teach us we ought to conquer."

As ſhe thus ſtood muſing, Aubrey, who, ſince his firſt meeting with Maria, had found a melancholy pleaſure in retracing that part of the garden, now entered the little arbour, followed by two artleſs and unoffending companions—his dog Florio, and a little tame fawn of Lady Melmoth's. He flung himſelf on the ſeat in a melancholy poſture; and immediately the fawn, uncourted, laid its little paws, and drooped its innocent head on his breaſt. Aubrey, ſtruck at the moment with an idea of ſympathy, ſtroaked its coat with an air of fondneſs that offended poor Florio, who ſtood by, and begun directly to bark, with evident ſigns of diſpleaſure.

"My poor animal," ſaid Aubrey, "turning his eyes compaſſionately upon

on the dog, "thou art jealous!—I pity thee!"—and, gently ſetting down the fawn, he patted the head of his old favourite, who ſprung up to receive the careſſes his fond and ſympathiſing maſter laviſhed upon him.

Maria, unſeen, heard all that paſſed—the ſcene affected her too keenly. She recollected the look of reproach he had given her, at the moment he thought her liſtening with complacency to the groſs flattery and common-place gallantry of a being ſo contemptible, in the opinion of ſentiment and reflection, as Lord Newry. The idea filled her eyes with tears. "Alas!" ſaid ſhe mentally, —"the eſteem, the reſpect of Aubrey, were the treaſures of my heart! Theſe, unleſs I explain myſelf, I muſt loſe for ever. Can there be a crime in an anxiety to retain the good opinion of an amiable object?—Surely not. Let me haſte then to clear myſelf from the imputation

putation of indiſcriminating vanity, and groſs indelicacy, ere the opportunity that now preſents itſelf paſſes by unuſed."

Her light ſtep on the graſs prevented Aubrey from perceiving her approach, till ſhe was paſſing the arbour; when he ſtarted from his ſeat with ſurprize, and advanced two or three ſteps towards her. Maria ſtopped; made an imperfect attempt to ſay ſomething; but, all confuſion, and bluſhing exceſſively, the period fell unfiniſhed from her lips.

"Does Miſs Mordaunt," ſaid Aubrey, ſomewhat recovering — "the charming, the admirable Miſs Mordaunt!—fly from flattering ſociety to ſolitude and meditation? — mournful propenſities of the melancholy and neglected."

"I fancy there are few minds, ſaid Maria," her heart ſmarting with the wound

wound it had ſo recently received, "totally void of ſuſceptibility to praiſe delicately exaggerated; but none, except ſouls vain and vulgar in the extreme, can be pleaſed with the abject flattery of corrupt and trifling ſpirits."

"And yet," returned Aubrey, "women, who at one time appeared very ſuperior beings, have been known to liſten, and that with apparent complacency, if not with delight, to the language of adulation, though abſolutely untinctured with the delicacy you mention.—I confeſs I know not how we are to ſolve this ſtrange contradiction.—Can *you* inform me?" added he, fixing his eyes piercingly on her face.

"I fear, ſometimes, from a perverted judgment in the obſerver (replied Maria) whoſe fancy might picture complacence there, where an unprejudiced ſpectator would diſcover nothing but diſapprobation

diſapprobation or diſguſt, thinly ſhaded by the veil of common civility."

There was an expreſſion of exquiſite ſoftneſs, mixed with an exculpatory ardour, in her countenance whilſt ſhe delivered theſe words, which fully convinced Aubrey his fears were without foundation; and conveyed to his breaſt ſenſations ſo lively and enchanting, that, forgetting the *general* ſtile in which ſhe had uttered her oblique, tho' tender little defence, he exclaimed, whilſt a ſoft rapture animated his aſpect,—"And do you not? And will you *never* liſten to *him?*"

"Never, oh never!" cried Maria, with an involuntary but forcible geſture.

"My God!" exclaimed Aubrey, ſeizing one of her hands, and preſſing it to his boſom, "how happy, yet how miſerable a moment is this!"—Maria made a gentle effort to withdraw her hand,—

hand,—he let it go,—and graſping his beating forehead with his own—ſtopped and turned from her.—His expreſſions, his diſtreſsful attitude, penetrated to the ſoul of Maria;—ſhe ſtood ſtill — ſhe looked mournfully upon him—and a ſoft ſigh broke from her aching heart.

"How I pity you," ſaid ſhe, in a voice ſcarcely audible; but Aubrey's ear caught the ſoothing ſound.

"Oh!" cried he, turning round, "Oh, if I make you unhappy, I am doubly miſerable!"

The bloom of beauty had given place to a tremulous paleneſs, and a tear hung on Maria's cheek, like the dew-drop on the ſmooth ſurface of the lily.

"I fear you are ill," ſaid Aubrey, leading her to a little green bench on one ſide of the walk: Maria ſat down, taking out her ſalts.

"Oh!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Aubrey, flinging himſelf on the ground, overcome with anguiſh, and no longer maſter of his actions, "what have I not loſt?—I have ſacrificed every pleaſure connected with the heart, with the beſt affections of the ſoul; and to what?—Oh God of heaven!—Had any motive noble, worthy, or unavoidable, impelled me; though my heart had bled at one time, it might at another have exulted in the honeſt conſciouſneſs of ſuffering merit:—then I could have borne inevitable ills well; very well.—But now, now I am doomed to the live-long hell of painful retroſpection!—Oh! the heart not naturally ſelfiſh, if it *once* ſacrifice at the ſhrine of *intereſt*, I too fatally feel, forfeits its peace for ever!"—

Here he ſtopped, leaning his head, covered with his hand, on the ſide of the ſeat, in an agony of paſſion.

"Oh, I cannot bear to ſee you thus," cried Maria, riſing to depart, "better far perhaps would it be we never meet again."

Aubrey roſe to follow her—"It ſhall be ſo, lovely Maria, if *you* command it:—But did you not juſt now ſay you pitied me?—Oh let me hear thoſe charming words reiterated, and the ſoothing ſounds ſhall ſoften the idea of baniſhment.—Be aſſured, the repetition ſhall ſubject you to no painful importunities.—I have formed a reſolution, which I will not fail to keep, though heaven knows the conflict it would coſt me to tear myſelf—

He was interrupted by a ruſtling among the ſhrubs, which proclaimed the approach of ſome one; and in an inſtant Lord Newry appeared.

His Lordſhip pretended to ſtart at the ſight of them, and bowing low, with a half-ſuppreſſed ſneer of anger, ſaid,

ſaid, "*I beg your pardon,*" and mimicking Aubrey's manner, retired. But, deſirous of interrupting any further converſation, he quickly returned; and, in order to gratify the envy he felt towards Aubrey for his having gained an opportunity of entertaining Maria alone, raillied them on their *tête-à-tête* walk, in his uſual coarſe ſtile, till they had nearly reached the end of the grove, when ſeeing Miſs Hampden glide into a diſtant walk, he left them to favour her with his company.

During his converſation with them, Maria had laboured under a degree of embarraſſment that is indeſcribable; an embarraſſment that pained Aubrey to the heart, as he felt himſelf the unhappy cauſe of it.

"Forgive me," ſaid he, the moment his Lordſhip diſappeared; "can you forgive the irkſome ſituation I have occaſioned you?—I ought not to have

obtruded my ſorrows on your retirement.—Believe me, however, that I did not ſeek premeditatedly that ſpot, with the expectation of ſeeing you; but the impulſe of the moment I could not reſiſt; and ſurely my ſufferings——"

"I feel your generoſity, Mr. Aubrey," ſaid Maria haſtily, interrupting him, "but I cannot accept an apology that exculpates my own conduct at your expence. — Mine was the impropriety! though it ſprung from a motive not in itſelf blame-worthy.—Alas! I too precipitately ſought an opportunity of vindicating myſelf in your opinion, from the appearance of folly, caprice, and indelicacy."

The noble, the generous, though unguarded ardency of this confeſſion augmented, if it could admit of augmentation, the tender refined idolatry of her lover.

How

"How truly grand!" exclaimed he, "how exalted is the generous frankneſs of that ſentiment!—Oh you were born always to be the object of my adoration!—You have ſeen the phrenzy of a paſſion which neither time nor abſence can obliterate!—You have ſaid, *it were better we never meet again*; and your wiſhes ſhall be mandates to me.—Be aſſured I have ſtill fortitude enough left, to prevent, by flight, the ſight of my grief from leſſening your happineſs.—Yes, my moſt lovely! my adored Maria! you ſhall ſee I know how to impoſe hard and cruel conditions upon myſelf.—I go from you—I tear myſelf as it were from myſelf. Oh, the man who has not reſolution ſufficient for that trial, when the happineſs or the eaſe of the woman he loves is concerned, is not worthy of her eſteem, is not worthy of ſociety!"

"Oh my God!" ſaid Maria, "it pains me to the heart when I recollect with what affectionate delight I have heard Lady Melmoth ſpeak of the time you were to ſpend with her. How peculiarly unhappy am I in being the means of depriving her of ſo ſweet and lively a pleaſure;—rather than it ſhould be ſo, I would return immediately to my friends, did I know how to leave her Ladyſhip without explaining myſelf to them and to her; but that cannot be."

"Ah, my dear Miſs Mordaunt," returned Aubrey, "your kind heart has ſmall, if any cauſe for regret on that ſubject;—in my preſent ſtate of mind, my company would afford little pleaſure to thoſe who are intereſted in my tranquillity or happineſs.—I ſhall depart in agonies; but it will ſometimes leſſen my *diſtreſs* to call to mind that you have ſaid you compaſſionate

it;

it;—that you pity what you cannot relieve."

"Pity!" exclaimed Maria; "Oh, believe me, I can never ceaſe to regret, that had I not unfortunately found a lover, I need not have loſt the ſociety of one of the moſt admirable and charming friends in the world. Pity you! indeed I do!—but farewel—this muſt be our laſt interview."

As ſhe ſpoke, they had reached the arbour.—Maria bowed, waved her hand, ſhot ſwiftly acroſs the turf, and went into the caſtle, leaving Aubrey fixed to the ſpot, his eyes turned towards the door by which ſhe had entered; whilſt on the ear of fancy, the mournful, the tender cadence of her voice ſeemed ſtill to vibrate, wounding, yet charming, the ſenſe of hearing, like the ſoul-ſoftening plaints of the ſtock-dove.

It was but a few moments, however, he enjoyed this melancholy delight—the harmonious accents died away—he awoke as from a ſoothing dream, to the gloomy conſciouſneſs of heart-ſickening reality. He darted precipitately into the thickeſt part of the grove; and, throwing himſelf on the ground, gave vent to the tranſports of deſpairing love.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XI.

IT was with difficulty either Aubrey or Maria aſſumed ſerenity ſufficient to appear at table. After dinner, when ſhe had withdrawn with Lady Melmoth and Miſs Hampden, Maria, to hide her ſadneſs and diſcompoſure, propoſed that each of them ſhould play and ſing an air, and her propoſal was inſtantly complied with.

When they had finiſhed, Miſs Hampden tenderly remarked, that Miſs Mordaunt looked indiſpoſed. Maria ſaid ſhe had a head-ach, and imputed her indiſpoſition to her having been ſomewhat affected by the ſight of Lady Davenhill; and took the opportunity of

mentioning to Lady Melmoth her relationſhip to the Davenhill family.

Lord Davenhill and the father of our heroine were firſt couſins, educated at the ſame ſeminary; and the ſuperior abilities of the latter had gained him the envy of the former; who eagerly emulated the conduct of his family, in dropping all intercourſe with Mr. Mordaunt, after his marriage.

Miſs Hampden, thinking the air would be of ſervice to Maria's head and ſpirits, recommended, and offered to accompany her in a ſhady walk in the garden. Lady Melmoth enforced her requeſt, ſaying, ſhe would amuſe herſelf with her muſic till their return. They went.—As they walked paſt the door of the dining parlour, which ſtood a little open, Lord Newry ſaw them; and (Aubrey having on ſome pretence left him) he preferred following the ladies to a lengthened *tête-a-tête* with Bacchus.

Bacchus. Juſt as he was about to leave the room, however, he chanced to recollect ſome orders he had to give to his ſervant, and rang the bell. This detained him ſome minutes; ſo that when he entered the garden, he had loſt ſight of the ladies; but ſoon deſcried them at a little diſtance.

As Miſs Hampden and Maria approached an artificial wilderneſs of uncommon extent and wonderful intricacy, the former unthinkingly propoſed their ſcreening themſelves from the ſun by exploring its mazes; to which Maria as thoughtleſsly acceded.

They had ſcarcely gone a few paces, before Lord Newry, who had unknown to them watched their motions, entered on the oppoſite ſide. Whilſt Aubrey, who from the window of his own apartment ſaw them all go in; and knowing, as they had no guide, they would loſe their way; and, perhaps,

not delighted Maria ſhould be expoſed to the neceſſity of hearing the profeſſions of Lord Newry, reſolved to follow them, and conduct the ladies out.

Miſs Hampden and Maria had not gone far, before they diſcovered they had ſo entangled themſelves, that they ſhould not be able to retrace their footſteps; and it unfortunately happened, that in turning about to *reconnoitre* another alley, Maria loſt ſight of her friend. She called upon her name, and was anſwered; but, though ſhe diſtinguiſhed from what part of the wilderneſs the ſound iſſued, ſhe could not find the way to her. But, in ſearching, ſhe ſtruck into a more open walk; and a little ſeat preſenting itſelf, ſhe ſat down, fatigued with running, and the heat of the weather. To add to the vexation ſhe felt at her perplexed ſituation, the briars had torn one of her arms in ſeveral places; and whilſt ſhe was wrapping

wrapping her handkerchief about it, to her infinite and diſagreeable ſurprize, Lord Newry bounded over a thicket oppoſite to the ſpot where ſhe ſat, and ſprung towards her.

"By the Evangeliſts! I have found manna in the wilderneſs!" exclaimed he. Maria roſe with the intention of flying from him, but, with a wildneſs and fire in his eyes that terrified her, he on his knees graſped her hands, conjuring her to hear him for a few moments. Maria told him, ſhe was ſeeking Miſs Hampden, and deſired he would not withhold her. But her intreaties were in vain; for compreſſing her hands ſtill more ardently, he compelled her to ſit;—proteſting that he knew the wilderneſs perfectly, and would conduct her ſafely out of it, if ſhe would only indulge him with ten minutes converſation.

"I have already told your Lordſhip,"

ſhip," ſaid Maria, "repeatedly, that I feel no attachment to your mind or perſon; it is highly illiberal, therefore, to importune me further." So ſaying, ſhe ſtrove, with all her power, to withdraw her hands from his impaſſioned graſp, but unavailingly.

"Stay, lovely, tho' cruel Miſs Mordaunt!" cried he; for your own ſake, if not for mine;—conſider, if you go without me, you will again loſe your way."

"I do not wiſh you to accompany me, my Lord; I only wiſh to free myſelf from your ungenerous importunities."

Here ſhe broke from him, but he caught hold of her, and again drew her to the ſeat.

"Cruel Maria!" cried Lord Newry, his eyes flaſhing fire whilſt he ſnatched her to his breaſt—"by the great God that made me, unleſs you ſay ſomething

to

to ſooth the deſpair and madneſs that fires my ſoul, I'll open a paſſage to my heart, and throw it bleeding at your feet!"

"Fie, fie, my Lord, for ſhame! forbear this unmanly rant, that ſinks you to a level with the ſavage race," cried Maria, ſcornfully, and ſtruggling to break from his hold.

"By all that's good, you ſhall not thus eſcape me! I have adored ever ſince the firſt moment I beheld you; I deteſt the ungenerous, ſordid fetters of marriage—but accept my ardent love, and you may command my life, my ſoul, my fortune as your own. Tell me what I ſhall do to ſerve you; give me but your love, and you ſhall find me your moſt ſubmiſſive ſlave. I'd pawn my reverſion of heaven, if it would procure a wiſh of yours, that could not be obtained by any other means."

"You ſhock my very ſoul," cried Maria;

Maria; "and if you do not inſtantly let me go, my cries ſhall expoſe your baſe deſign."

"Were Aubrey here," ſaid Lord Newry, paſſionately, "not even the ſolitude of this receſs, would make you ſhrink at being alone with him."

"No," replied Maria, "I ſhould have no cauſe; his own honour would teach him to be the guardian of mine."

Leave all theſe nice diſtinctions," ſaid Lord Newry, "that owe their birth to coldneſs.—Retirement! opportunity! every thing conſpires, to increaſe the fury of my paſſion!—By heavens! you ſhall not thus eſcape me."

Saying theſe words, he caught her in his arms, with an impetuoſity that heightened her terrors, and cauſed her to ſhriek aloud. Whilſt ſhe was ſtruggling to diſengage herſelf, and breathleſs with exertion, Aubrey appeared before

fore them.—Lord Newry, for a moment, ſeemed petrified with ſurprize; and a ſcream of joy burſt from Maria.

"How have you dared, my Lord," cried Aubrey, his countenance glowing with the fire of indignation; "how have you dared to inſult a woman of honour, under my immediate protection, as the gueſt of Lady Melmoth?"

"How have I dared, Sir?" reiterated Lord Newry, biting his lips; "quit this place immediately with me; and I will anſwer your imperious interrogatories in a proper manner.

"I will attend you inſtantly, my Lord," ſaid Aubrey, haughtily.

Maria, wild and diſtracted, threw herſelf between them, beſeeching them to lay aſide their animoſity. Her looks, her attitude, wounded the feeling heart of Aubrey. He ſtopped; and caſting a glance at Lord Newry, that bade him mark her diſtreſs, ſaid, in a low, but firm

firm voice, "We may meet again, my Lord, before the day closes."

"Now, Sir! now is the time!" said his lordship,—fury breaking from his eyes.

"It is well," said Aubrey; "let us go; I believe I best know the way out—follow me, my Lord." Saying which, he leaped over a little hedge; and Lord Newry following his example, they were out of the sight of Maria in a moment, who had stood some minutes gazing, without sense or motion. When she returned to the horrors of reflection, she recollected she had heard them mention the little grove of limes, and concluded they were flying to the castle to fetch pistols, in order to end their contention there. Wrought up to madness by this idea, she flew frantically about, striving to make her way out of the wilderness; but for some time only perplexed herself the more. At length she

ſhe got out, though with much difficulty, and ran towards the grove. As ſhe approached, Lord Newry ruſhed forth, one of his arms bound with a handkerchief.

"Savage!" cried Maria, ſeizing the ſkirt of his coat as he paſſed her, "what haſt thou done?"

"Detain me not, Madam," ſaid he; "your own obſtinacy hath done every thing;—curſe on your fooliſh ſex. I am going to ſend aſſiſtance." As he ſpoke, he left her — ſpringing over hedges and buſhes, like one purſued by the Furies. Maria, now winged by deſpair, ran to the fatal ſpot. At the foot of the pedeſtal ſhe found Aubrey, reclined on the graſs, faint with the loſs of blood, and pale as the ſculptured reſemblance of his features.

"Oh God!" cried ſhe,—"the ſun, which looks on all, ſees not a wretch like me!" Scarcely had ſhe ſtrength

ſtrength to reach his ſide, when, bending on her knees, her terror and grief for the moment incapacitating her from affording him the leaſt relief, ſhe ſunk, in an agony of woe, upon his bleeding boſom. Aubrey, who ſuppoſed ſhe had ſwooned, lifted up his languid head, and, incapable of aſſiſting her, uttered a deep and piercing ſigh. The ſound rouſed Maria from her lethargy of grief; and, raiſing herſelf, ſhe ſaw the handkerchief he had applied to his wound drenched in blood. She inſtantly tore, with trembling haſte, part of the muſlin dreſs ſhe wore, applying it as a ſtyptic. And, having in ſome degree ſtopped the ſanguinary effuſion, ſhe raiſed his head from the ground, holding her ſalts to his noſtrils. In a little time, he ſo much revived as to be able to expreſs his gratitude, for her tender and aſſiduous exertions, articulately.

"How kind—how infinitely kind

are

are your attentions," ſaid he, holding faſt her hand, as ſhe knelt; "but do not longer alarm your gentle ſpirits; when the ſurgeon arrives, I ſhall ſoon get better."

"Oh why," ſaid Maria, grief and tenderneſs abſorbing every faculty of her ſoul, and weeping mournfully, "why did you riſk a life ſo dear to every one?"

"*So dear!* oh heavens!" cried Aubrey, a lambent ray illumining his countenance whilſt he gazed upon her, "Ah, my ſweet Maria, I had promiſed to leave the ſpot which contained you; and I felt agonies ſo great at the thought, that what *you* term a cruel riſk, *I* joyfully embraced as a happy chance of loſing a life I could not poſſeſs without miſery:—Oh! to have loſt it in your cauſe I could have died content.

"Ah," ſaid Maria, gazing ſorrowfully on

on his face, "how pale you look!—Merciful heaven!—will they never come—perhaps Lord Newry has neglected to order a ſurgeon to be ſent for;—perhaps no one but my miſerable ſelf is yet acquainted with the fatal intelligence.—Oh my loved, adored, reſpected Lady Melmoth, how ſhall I meet your eyes, after having occaſioned this diſaſter?—Let me fly to the caſtle—Lord Newry has only provided for his *own* ſafety, and neglected *yours*.—My God! what will become of me?"

"Oh ſtay," ſaid Aubrey, ſtriving, with the little ſtrength he poſſeſſed, to detain her, "do not leave me,—I exiſt but in your preſence;—your fears preſage too rapidly, too ſeverely; he cannot be ſo loſt to honour, to humanity.—Oh ſtay! and do not further agitate your tender frame, already too

much wearied with emotion and fatigue."

"I cannot bear to ſee you thus," reiterated Maria, "let me go;—let me fly;—and thus ſaying, ſhe broke from him and ran a few paces—when, hearing the ſound of feet, ſhe ſtopped, and in an inſtant Lady Melmoth, a ſurgeon, and ſome of her ladyſhip's ſervants, came up to her.

"Where is my brother," cried Lady Melmoth, wildly, "where is he? guide us to him."

Maria could make no anſwer, but by flying immediately to the place.

Lady Melmoth, the moment ſhe caſt her eyes on the pale aſpect and bleeding form of her brother, uttered a ſcream of horror; and kneeling beſide him, preſſed her lips to his wan cheek

"Oh, my beloved Edward! my dear brother!" cried ſhe; "how keen muſt

muſt have been the provocation that could have urged thy ſweet nature, to ſo direful, ſo deſperate an encounter!"

Aubrey, by this time grown weak and debilitated in the extreme from the loſs of blood, could only return, to this effuſion of affection, a faint preſſure of the hand:—and the ſurgeon, perceiving the ſituation of his patient, begged the ladies to retire, whilſt he examined the wound. After having again preſſed the pallid lips of Aubrey, with a look of tenderneſs and affection, whilſt her faſt-flowing tears watered his boſom, ſhe aroſe from the ground; and, turning to Maria,—"Come, my love," ſaid ſhe, "we will go into the next walk; and the moment Mr. Johnſon has *pronounced*," (added ſhe to her ſervants) "bring us word."

Lady Melmoth had ſpoken twice to Maria, without being heard; ſhe ſtood

"Like a dead lover's ſtatue on his tomb"—

her

her hands laid acroſs each other, and preſſed hard upon her boſom; her eyes raiſed to heaven,—the big drops ſtanding on her tintleſs cheeks,—and grief and anguiſh ſpread o'er all her features.

"Come, my love," reiterated her ladyſhip, taking her hand, "we will go."

Maria, recovering from her bitter reverie, mournfully followed her; but without uttering a word, till they had got to a conſiderable diſtance.—"I can go no farther," ſaid her ladyſhip; "I cannot leave the grove, whilſt in this dreadful uncertainty." So ſaying, ſhe leant againſt a tree, ſtill holding the hand of Maria, who, overcome with grief, now threw herſelf on her knees before her.

"Can you—will you, moſt dear Madam! ever look upon me again, but with horror and deteſtation?—when you ſhall know, it was in revenging an in-

ſult offered to me, your brother received the wound for which your heart now bleeds—And oh! which has murdered my peace for ever."

"Look upon you with horror, my ſweet friend!—Oh no!" cried her ladyſhip, raiſing her, and folding her to her boſom;—"rather let us mingle our tears together; for equally, I believe, do we ſuffer.—Ah, I have long known my dear Edward unhappy; but till to-day, I knew not the full extent of his wretchedneſs:—to-day he wounded me with the intelligence, that he meant to leave me to-morrow. Fatally, fatally, I fear, will his reſolve be retarded."

"He has told you then," cried Maria, "that I have been the means of adding to his ſorrows. You know that for me he has riſked his life: and yet you ſtill call me friend;—you ſtill hold me to your generous heart.—How nobly

bly conſiſtent, how benevolently kind, how ſweetly ſympathetic, is every part of your conduct! Ah! my dear Miſs Hampden, I ſee even the enthuſiaſtic warmth of your ſpirit did not cauſe you to exaggerate; you pourtray'd with the *bold*, but *correct*, pencil of truth."

At this moment they ſaw a ſervant coming towards them; and walked forward, with trembling impatience, to meet him.

The ſurgeon had dreſſed Aubrey's wounds; and had pronounced that, with extreme quietneſs and care, he might recover in a ſhort time; but that much was to be apprehended from a fever, or from mental agitation. The man added, that he had been placed on a bier, and the ſervants were then carrying him to the houſe.

The ladies, much comforted, now

walked towards the caſtle, with all the ſpeed they could make.

Lord Newry, during the ſcene of affliction I have related, had begun his journey to London. It ſeems, he had concluded Aubrey mortally wounded; and, having ſcrambled out of the garden, ran to the caſtle; when calling for his valet, and taking him aſide—"Fly," cried he, "as if all hell was at your heels, and fetch the firſt ſurgeon you can find; when you return, tell the ſervant to conduct him to the little grove of limes. An unfortunate affair has happened;—I am going to the inn to order the chariot, and ſhall take the road to London the moment the horſes are put to.—Fly, and perform what I have told you,—and then follow me."

CHAP.

## CHAP. XII.

THE delicate frame of Maria, overcome with the terrors and conflicts to which this day of calamity had ſubjected her, was ſeized on the evening with a fever, which, before morning, had riſen to ſo great a height, that an actual delirium bewildered her faculties; and her life became doubtful for ſeveral days. Lady Melmoth, with the tendereſt aſſiduity, divided her cares between her brother and Maria; but Miſs Hampden, involved in the deepeſt affliction, ſcarcely ſtirred (but to miniſter to her relief) from the bed-ſide of her fair friend during the whole of her illneſs.

Aubrey, as the ſurgeon had prognoſticated, was ſoon in a fair way of recovery;—but Maria, for ſeveral weeks after ſhe was pronounced out of danger, remained in a ſtate ſo weak and enervated as to be confined to her own apartment.

Lady Melmoth's anxiety, during their illneſs, had been much increaſed by a very momentous contingency.

A meſſenger arrived at the caſtle the third day after the rencountre of Aubrey and Lord Newry; and, on announcing that he had ſome important intelligence to communicate to the former, he was conducted to Lady Melmoth, whom he informed, that Mrs. Aubrey then lay dead at Bath.

Her ladyſhip, knowing the dangerous conſequences a ſurprize of this ſort, imprudently communicated to him, might have on her brother's health, carefully inſtructed thoſe of her people who attended

tended him, not to mention any thing reſpecting this incident: and wrote immediately to a near relation, whom ſhe requeſted to act on the occaſion for him.

The firſt day however after Aubrey had quitted his own apartment, Lady Melmoth happened to find him ſitting alone, in a gloomy poſture, at the bottom of the little gallery we have before mentioned, and being no longer afraid of injuring his health, ſhe took that opportunity of making him acquainted with the change in his affairs, — but had ſcarcely given him the information, before a ſervant announced that a viſitor waited to ſee her ladyſhip; and ſhe left Aubrey to the free indulgence of thoſe reflections her communication had inſpired.

He had hardly in any degree collected his ideas, confuſed and ſcattered by the intelligence he had received, when they

were again inſtantaneouſly deranged by the unexpected preſence of Maria, who came to walk in the gallery, not having yet ventured into the garden. As ſhe entered with her back toward the place where Aubrey ſat, ſhe imagined herſelf alone; and moving ſlowly to one of the Gothic arches, ſtopped and leant penſively againſt it, to enjoy the pleaſure of contemplating the fine portrait which had once inſpired her with ſo much terror.

The feelings of Maria had hitherto been much more peaceful ſince her illneſs than before. The aids of religion and philoſophy had brought her mind to view the proſpects of her future life with a calm though melancholy turn of thought. But the ſight of the wounded and bleeding figure, recalled to her ideas the ſcenes in which ſhe had ſo lately borne a diſtreſsful part, with a force that began to awaken her every nerve

to

to anguiſh.—She ſtrove however to ſuppreſs thoſe poignant ſenſations, and by degrees, the mild ſpirit of reſignation to Providence again breathed its benignant influence over her wounded heart.—

"Sweet heaven!" cried ſhe, raiſing her tearful eyes, "I thank thee that thou didſt not, by depriving him of life, fill up the bitter meaſure of my ſorrows:—I thank thee that I have not at this moment the killing reflection, that his generous raſhneſs in my defence ſteeped a parent's couch in tears; or moiſtened with the drops of never-ending regret the tender eyes of an affectionate ſiſter.—Oh! I have ſuffered much, but let me remember, with gratitude, he yet lives!"

The attitude in which ſhe uttered theſe words, gave the moſt elegant profile in the world to the ſight of Aubrey; than which nothing could be more affecting:—Sickneſs had increaſ-

ed, if poſſible, the delicacy of her features; whilſt the feelings of the moment heightened their native expreſſion of ſoftneſs and ſentiment into ſomething of a ſeraphic meekneſs and heavenly elevation

Aubrey, charmed to rapture, moved towards her, exclaiming—"Lovely, angelic Maria!"—

She ſtarted at the ſound of his voice; and; turning round, with the tremulous reſpiration of ſurprize and confuſion, uttered—"Oh Mr. Aubrey!" her eyes involuntarily fixed on the ground.

"How I rejoice, Miſs Mordaunt," ſaid he, "to ſee you in ſo happy a meaſure reſtored to health!—and how I regret that the conduct of any gueſt in this houſe ſhould have been the means of deſtroying it!"

"With how much ſincerity may I return the ſame compliment!" replied Maria, filled with painful apprehenſions

that he had heard her little ſoliloquy: "not one of your friends, Mr. Aubrey, can more truly have deplored your dangerous confinement;—not one perhaps ſo much, for *I* had to lament having been the unhappy occaſion."

"Oh, I believe you," cried Aubrey, taking one of her hands and ardently preſſing it to his lips; "you are the very ſoul of tenderneſs and truth.—Every ſentiment I hear breathed from thoſe lips, every freſh view of that lovely form, raiſes my ſenſibility to your virtues, and my fond admiration of your attractions to idolizing enthuſiaſm!—an enthuſiaſm that, till this moment, I never felt without pain.—But Hope, the ſweet inſpirer Hope, NOW chears my heart, and enlivens my long dejected ſpirit!"

Startled by the ardency of his expreſſions, after his ſolemn and voluntary promiſe never again to introduce the ſub-

ject of his paſſion; and yet more ſurprized at the looks of hope and pleaſure which animated his countenance whilſt he ſpoke; Maria could impute his altered manner to nothing but his having formed improper hopes from the expreſſions he had overheard; and, ſhocked at this ſuſpicion, ſhe haſtily replied,

"From my ſentiments, Mr. Aubrey, you have nothing more to hope, than when your ſeemingly reſpectful attachment influenced you to a voluntary promiſe of ſilence on this head, and even prompted you to a reſolution of baniſhing yourſelf from this place.—Oh, think not my heart ſo weak (ſoft as I confeſs it is) that it will not riſe to contemn the object it moſt valued, when the virtues that inſpired its attachment diſappear or grow fewer!"

As ſhe ſpoke ſhe turned from him to depart; but, ſtriving to detain her with gentle force and tender eagerneſs, he exclaimed,

"Stay,

"Stay, Maria! my life! my love! Stay but whilſt I explain to you"—

"I cannot, I muſt not liſten to you," replied Maria, interrupting him, with all the firmneſs ſhe could aſſume; "you ought not to aſk me to liſten to you.—You can have no explanation to make, that will not leſſen you in my eſtimation; and I will not do you the injuſtice to hear you utter what would perhaps tarniſh the honour of your character for ever in my opinion.—I would not have *conviction*—Oh let it always remain a *doubt* with me, that Aubrey ever wiſhed to plead a wrong cauſe."

"I wiſh to plead *no wrong cauſe*, my Maria," returned he; "I only wiſh to repeat to you how fondly my heart reſts on the hope of your partiality for all its future happineſs; and to tell you, that no ties now exiſt which make it improper for me to ſolicit from you that ſoft confeſſion which only can make me *deſire*, I had almoſt ſaid, *endure* life."

Maria,

Maria, agitated by a variety of emotions, ſtood ſilent ſome moments, without even looking upon him.—

"Oh my God!" exclaimed he, "you make no anſwer; you take no part in what concerns me!"—

"Do not injure my friendſhip ſo much," ſaid Maria; "be aſſured, Mr. Aubrey, that whatever brings peace to your mind muſt give pleaſure to mine. Suffer me now to leave you; I have exhauſted my ſpirits in this converſation; —do not detain me."

"Oh heavens!" cried he, "I have then deceived myſelf.—I fondly flattered my imagination you felt a degree of partiality for me; but your coldneſs now convinces me I had no farther intereſt in your heart, than what your knowledge of my ſorrows created.—The cauſe removed, your attachment ceaſes.—Oh Maria! confeſs that you have this moment read the bottom of your heart!—you ſee the

ſtate

ſtate of mine, and the tenderneſs of your diſpoſition makes you dread to tell me you are indifferent.—If I muſt be wretched, tell me ſo this inſtant!—After you have pronounced my deſtiny, I will not detain you a moment;—I could not bear to hear you *twice* ſay, I was wholly indifferent to you."

"You cannot, you do not believe me ſo," replied Maria; "ought I to be inſenſible to the worth of the preſerver of my life and my honour?"

"Is a ſentiment of gratitude all the return you can make, Maria, to the ardent tenderneſs of my ſoul? I hoped, fondly hoped it was not; let me ſtill think ſo. For heaven's ſake, ſay ſomething to calm my agitated heart!—if it be but one word of pity and kindneſs!—I flew to you with tranſport, and you freeze me with looks and expreſſions of the coldeſt import!—I cannot deſcribe to you what I feel; the violent

violent tranſitions my mind has gone through within theſe few minutes are not to be imagined."

The impatience with which he ſpoke theſe words affected Maria in the moſt forcible manner.

"Alas, Mr. Aubrey! why will you give me occaſion to reproach you with indelicacy?" ſaid ſhe, with a look and tone of voice that mingled tenderneſs with reproof; "why will you force me to utter, what I fear you have already too plainly ſeen?—Oh! you know I am not indifferent to your merits."

"Why then, my ſweet Maria," ſaid Aubrey, "why that eſtranged look, when I firſt ſpoke to you of the change in my ſituation?—And wherefore theſe tears?"

"I know not how to explain the ſenſation," replied Maria, "but the ſight of your tranſports, when you firſt told me of the alteration in your affairs, had a quite

quite contrary effect on *my* ſpirits.—Oh! there is ſomething in the idea of *rejoicing* at obtaining a good, that was not to be gained but by another's death, that chills the ſoul!—If, therefore, it is an *unnatural* ſenſation to rejoice, it muſt certainly be a wrong one; at leaſt it appears ſo to me."

"Your reaſoning, my charming little philoſopher," ſaid Aubrey, ſmiling, "ſeems to partake ſomewhat of that gloomy tinge which ill health and weak ſpirits are apt to throw over the mind. It is true, there are forms exacted by the world, which ſhould be immutable; the decencies and decorums of life ought not to be broken in upon. But I ſee no occaſion why (if I may uſe the expreſſion) we ſhould *act a farce before our own hearts*; why we ſhould attempt to inſpire ourſelves with feelings of regret that do not flow ſpontaneous, or for which there is no cauſe.—I recollect a

ſentiment

ſentiment of your favourite Rouſſeau on this ſubject;—'Lamentations for the dead,' ſays he, 'afford a pleaſing proof of the ſenſibility of our nature, but are certainly no part of our duty.—If then there is no real virtue in mourning the death even of a parent; to affect what we do not feel muſt be wrong; for hypocriſy is always criminal.'

"At preſent I have ſo bad a headach" ſaid Maria, ſmiling, "that I cannot enter into an inveſtigation of the truth of your reaſoning; permit me therefore to leave you;" and ſo ſaying ſhe haſtily glided away.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XIII.

THE moment Maria got into her own apartment, ſhe threw herſelf haſtily on her chair, and leaning her head on a table, involved in thought, in that poſture remained till ſhe heard ſomebody rap at the door: It was Lady Melmoth's woman; who, on being admitted, delivered to her a letter:—

"From whom does it come?" ſaid ſhe, perceiving it had no poſt-mark.

"I don't know, Madam; a countryman brought it,—but did not wait for an anſwer," replied the girl, and retired.

Maria impatiently broke the ſeal, and to her infinite conſternation, read as follows:

"Madam,

"Madam,

"Nothing but the moſt perfect information of the rectitude of your heart, and the ſweetneſs of your diſpoſition, could have induced me to wiſh, much leſs requeſt, an interview with you:—I have ſome particulars to unfold, concerning a perſon now high in your eſtimation, that may ſave you from much future miſery, and afford you an opportunity of ſerving one, who, though unfortunate, will not, I truſt, be found undeſerving your ſympathy and aſſiſtance. I have ſcarcely a hope that you will do me the honour of calling upon me ſome time to-morrow, as the underwritten addreſs directs: but if your deſire of mitigating diſtreſs ſhould be ſtrong enough to influence you to overlook the want of etiquette in my introduction to you—I muſt intreat you will not bring any one with you, as that circumſtance would entirely deſtroy the intention

intention with which I ſolicit this interview, namely, that of mutual confidence and mutual ſervice.

"I am, Madam, with the greateſt eſteem and admiration, your moſt obedient ſervant and well-wiſher.

"Pleaſe to enquire for Mrs. Rawlinſon, at Wilton Farm."

Various were the feelings of Maria on the peruſal of this letter; ſhe could not conceive to whom the writer alluded, as the *perſon high in her eſtimation.*—Her partial ſentiments for Aubrey had never paſſed the confines of her own breaſt; and therefore to him ſhe did not apprehend it had reference.

Her unſuſpecting turn of mind, and the benevolence of her heart, quickly made her determine to go:—but prudence, after ſome minutes reflection, repreſented it to her as dangerous and improper. But happening again to examine the direction incloſed in the letter, ſhe recollected that the farm-houſe,

at

at which ſhe was deſired to call, belonged to Lady Melmoth; remembering that one day, on their return from a walk, her ladyſhip ſtopped and ſpoke to the farmer and his wife, whom ſhe afterwards commended as good tenants and worthy people. Maria therefore concluded no harm could happen to her under their roof;—and this recollection fixed her wavering purpoſe.

Her next concern was how to go without the knowledge of the family: and the thought preſented itſelf, of riſing early, and going out through the garden gate, as ſhe had often done, and taken a ſolitary walk before Miſs Hampden awakened.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XIV.

MARIA enquired for the writer of the letter by the name mentioned in it:—And as the perſon of the houſe conducted her through a little paſſage to the apartment of the lady, which lay at the end of it, the door being open, ſhe ſaw a woman of an elegant and attractive form, and whoſe age did not ſeem to exceed five and twenty, ſmoothing the fair locks of a little girl of about four or five years old:—As Maria approached, ſhe roſe from her ſeat, and gracefully, though not without a degree of confuſion, thanked her for the generous and liberal attention ſhe had paid to her invitation, aſſuring her ſhe ſhould have no cauſe to regret the

the confidence ſhe had placed in her. The beauty of this lady's perſon, the graces of her manner, united to the peculiarity of her ſituation, and the idea of her being in ſome kind of diſtreſs, and having applied to her for relief, affected Maria in the moſt forcible manner; and it appeared to her that ſhe had never before ſeen an object ſo intereſting. She replied to the lady's expreſſions,—"That the ingenuouſneſs of her countenance and manner left her nothing to doubt." The lady bowed, and ſeemed preparing to give an account of her motives for requeſting the interview; when Maria, in order to afford her time for recollection, with great ſweetneſs, begun to careſs and play with the child. In raiſing it to her lap, however, ſhe happened to caſt her eyes on a miniature which hung from a ribband round its neck; ſtruck motionleſs with ſurprize, ſhe perceived that it bore a ſtrong reſemblance

ſemblance to Aubrey, and continued viewing it for ſome moments with breathleſs aſtoniſhment. The features and air of the perſon were ſo ſtrongly marked, that it was impoſſible for her to perſuade herſelf it was an accidental likeneſs;—and ſhe now looked on the lady, and now on the picture, with glances of the moſt piercing inquiry.—Some minutes elapſed before either of them could ſpeak;—but at length the fair ſtranger exclaimed, in a tremulous tone of voice:—

"Alas! my dear Madam, this ſurprize is only a prelude to greater and more affecting ones."

Maria, ſickening at the heart with terror and apprehenſions, leant back in her chair; and the lady continued for ſome time in a ſituation incapable of affording her any conſolation or aſſiſtance.

Maria firſt broke ſilence.

"Oh Madam," exclaimed ſhe, "for heaven's ſake, explain to me the meaning of all this!—If I have any part in it—if I can be of any ſervice to you, do not delay to make the neceſſary communications."

"I will obey you, Madam," returned ſhe, wiping the tears mournfully from her eyes, "but I muſt firſt intreat your patience, whilſt I make myſelf and ſome particulars of my ill-fated life known to you."

"Relate every thing, Madam," ſaid Maria, with infinite tenderneſs, though overwhelmed with anxiety, "relate every thing in the manner moſt agreeable to yourſelf;—but proceed, Oh proceed without delay!"

"I will not delay," replied the lady, inſtantly entering on her ſtory.

"My real name is Villars;—my father was a lieutenant in the army; and the commiſſion he bore, his whole reve-

nue;—I was his only child;—my mother died whilſt I was an infant;—and at the age of nineteen, I had the misfortune to loſe my father. A few months before his death, he had become acquainted with Mr. Aubrey, who, intereſted by the worth and integrity of his character, had promiſed to exert himſelf warmly in his favour with the colonel of his regiment, in order to procure his advancement.

"During their acquaintance, ſhort as it had been, Mr. Aubrey had frequently viſited at our houſe:—the charms of his converſation, and the elegance and delicacy of his manners, but more than all, the friendſhip he profeſſed for my father, and the zeal with which he entered into his concerns, gained him my moſt favourable opinion. It happened however (I believe he had been out of Town) that during my father's illneſs he came not

once to ſee us till the fatal day of his death, when he called to inform him that he had obtained a promiſe of a captain's commiſſion for him—and alas! to ſee him expire. A relation took charge of the funeral.—Involved in the deepeſt affliction, I was for ſeveral days unable to ſee any one during that time. Mr. Aubrey either called himſelf (with an appearance of extreme anxiety) or ſent to enquire after my health every day. About a week after the interment of my father, he called, requeſting, if it were poſſible for me to ſuffer the interruption, that I would ſee him.—I admitted him.—The recollection of his behaviour to my father, and his attention to me ſince his death, joined to the amiable opinion I before entertained of him, affected me in an extreme degree.—I could not ſpeak,—I could not thank him—tears interrupted my ſpeech.—

Mr.

Mr. Aubrey condoled with me in a manner the moſt ſoothing, elegant, and reſpectful; intreating, if there was any thing in which he could ſerve me, that I would command him. In ſhort, he omitted nothing that a feeling and affectionate heart could ſuggeſt on ſuch an occaſion. When he took his leave, he begged I would do him the honour to number him among my friends, and ſometimes admit him to viſit me.

"This requeſt, ſo earneſtly made, my gratitude would not permit me to deny; and I ſaw him frequently at the houſe of a relation, with whom I went to reſide after the death of my father. Unfortunate and ever to be lamented was this permiſſion! The frequency of his viſits, the ardency with which he intereſted himſelf in every thing that concerned me, and the evident diſtraction of his manner at times, ſoon ſpoke too plainly, that I had in-

ſpired him with a violent and tender paſſion. My own heart was ſtill a prey to ſadneſs and affliction; a ſituation of all others, perhaps, the moſt favourable to love. Grief enervates the ſoul, and renders it vulnerable to ſoft and tender impreſſions of every kind. It is likewiſe diſpoſed to ſeek participation, and naturally attaches itſelf to every thing that wears the aſpect of comfort or conſolation. Attachments thus formed, are, I believe, more frequently durable, than thoſe commenced under happier auſpices. In the latter caſe, the impreſſion may only have penetrated the ſurface; in the former, it has ſunk to the bottom of the heart. But I ſeek not to palliate my fault. You, Madam, have a heart that can feel for weakneſſes it never knew. Alas! it pains me to the ſoul to ſee the diſtreſs I occaſion you; but it is neceſſary I ſhould go on.—I will be brief.

"Mr.

"Mr. Aubrey ſo repeatedly and ſo pathetically deplored to me the unhappineſs of his own ſituation, and the added miſery he had ſuſtained ſince he knew me, that my ſoul caught the contagious ſoftneſs; and, in an evil hour, I ſubmitted to give up honour, friends, every thing—to live with the man I adored:—but under a ſolemn, though verbal, promiſe of marriage, if I ſhould ſurvive his wife, which the diſparity of our ages made probable."

"Oh, let me hear no more!" cried Maria, reſting her forehead on her hands in an agony; "I now know how it is you wiſh me to ſerve you. Oh, truſt me, I will not obſtruct—yes, rely upon me.—I give him up—I renounce him for ever!—Yes, you have my irrevocable word of honour—but, in pity, let me hear no more. Oh! you have diſſipated the fond and enthuſiaſtic admiration of his worth, which

has ſo long alternately pained and delighted my heart!—but the blow has cruſhed me to the earth. Yes, you may rely on my reſolution,"—cried ſhe, ſhedding a torrent of tears, and throwing herſelf back in her chair.

"Oh! how wretched am I, to be the communicator of intelligence ſo afflicting," ſaid the lady; "but I am——"

"Tell me, Madam! be kind enough to explain to me," interrupted Maria, haſtily, "how you became acquainted with Mr. Aubrey's ſentiments of me."

"From the coldneſs and infrequency of his letters, ſince his reſidence at the caſtle, I was fearful," replied ſhe, "indifference, or ſome new object, had taken poſſeſſion of his heart; and I was ſoon painfully impelled to be of the latter opinion.—A gentleman, who had for ſome years ſtiled himſelf the friend of Mr. Aubrey, called upon me, and (I am inclined to think with no honourable

honourable intention) told me of the duel; and that he had heard the matter of contention arose about a very beautiful young lady, then at Lady Melmoth's. Perceiving the distress into which he had thrown me, he pretended to apologize for his abrupt intelligence, and soon withdrew. My own servant, (who had lived with me ever since I left my friends, and was strongly attached to me) seeing my anxiety, which it was impossible for me to conceal, begged to partake my uneasiness. As she was well acquainted with all my situation, I told her every thing that had been related to me; and a means of coming at the truth of what I had been informed, instantly occurred to her. She had a cousin who lived with Lady Melmoth; and from whom (having formerly served her) she could gain any intelligence. To this young woman she immediately wrote, and

learnt from her, that a duel had actually been fought between Mr. Aubrey and Lord Newry, about a lady who had ſpent the ſummer with Lady Melmoth. That ſhe was extremely beautiful, and that ſhe had often heard Lady Melmoth and Miſs Hampden ſpeak in raptures of her underſtanding and accompliſhments. Adding, that ſhe knew Mr. Aubrey had a ſtrong partiality for Miſs Mordaunt; and then related a converſation in the garden ſhe had overheard, to juſtify her aſſertion. This information completed my miſery; and on the death of Mrs. Aubrey, which happened ſoon afterwards, I conceived the moſt deſpairing ideas; concluding, that the tranſports of a violent paſſion would induce him to break his vows to me, and marry the new object of his affections. —Oh, my God! what have I not ſuffered?—At length, the idea, that if I could, by unfolding to you my melancholy

choly ſtory, prevent your accepting him, time might wear out an hopeleſs attachment, and return to me his wandering heart. With this hope, I came here ten days ago, and have waited impatiently for intelligence from Lady Melmoth's maid, when you appeared ſufficiently recovered to make it probable you would be able to walk ſo far, ſhould you be inclined to attend to my letter. Oh, Madam! you have been repreſented to me as the moſt amiable of your ſex. It is true you have ſaid —and I doubt not your generoſity— that you give him up; that you renounce him for ever. But, notwithſtanding you ſhould inflexibly preſerve that reſolution, if you ſhould impart to him, or any part of his family, the diſcovery I have made—the reſentment he would feel towards me, as the deſtroyer of his hopes, might irrecoverably eſtrange from me his affections.—

Oh! unleſs you have reſolution enough to preſerve ſecret your *real* motive for refuſing him,—I have no hope, no proſpect, of the ſmalleſt ray of comfort!"

"I have ſaid, Madam," replied Maria, "you might depend on me:—and be aſſured, that I will be no bar to any proſpect of future happineſs you may entertain. Yes, be comforted! You have diſpelled the charm that had captivated my fancy; and may ſafely rely on my reſolution."

She now aroſe to depart, with a degree of fancied heroiſm; but before ſhe could reach the door of the room in which they ſat, it opened—and the entrance of the little girl ſhe had before ſeen, gave a new aſſault to her heart. She ſtooped down; ſhe wreathed her tender arms about its little form; and, in bidding farewel to this innocent charmer, tears interrupted her words. This effuſion of ſoftneſs appeared to

alarm

alarm the lady; and ſhe ſoftly exclaimed, in a tone that implied a doubt of the inflexibility of Maria's determination—"Oh heavens! my heart trembles for the event."

Maria perceiving her apprehenſions —"Be not alarmed, Madam," ſaid ſhe; "tho' I do not conceal from you the keenneſs of my emotions,—be aſſured, it is in the ſtrength of my feelings, part of your ſecurity lies: truſt me, my ſenſibility is not confined to my own ſorrows." So ſaying, ſhe bowed, and, ſtriving to hide the painful workings of her heart, under a look of ſweetneſs and compoſure, withdrew.

She ſupported herſelf with tolerable firmneſs, till ſhe got out of ſight of the houſe; when, overcome with, and no longer able to reſtrain her griefs, ſhe threw herſelf on the ground beſide a little hillock; and, preſſing her lovely forehead againſt the turf, gave way to the

the moſt poignant complainings. In this ſituation ſhe continued many minutes. At length her reaſon returned; and ſhe blamed herſelf for giving way to the torturing weakneſs. She roſe from the ground;—alternately moving ſlowly forwards, her mind racked with forming plans for her future conduct;—or, darting precipitately along, as if trying to fly from thought and reflection: and now again, abruptly ſtopping, and claſping her hands, ſhe mourned to the paſſing winds, like one bereft of reaſon.

In this diſtracted ſtate of mind Maria remained, till ſhe perceived her near approach to the caſtle, when ſhe began to ſtruggle for more compoſure of manner, to enable her to fulfil the promiſe of ſecrecy ſhe had made.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XV.

WHEN our fair heroine got into the caſtle, ſhe haſtened to her own chamber, where ſhe found Miſs Hampden juſt preparing to go down to breakfaſt. On ſeeing Maria, ſhe eagerly exclaimed, with an earneſtneſs peculiar to herſelf,—"My dear Miſs Mordaunt, how pale and fatigued you look!"

Maria ſat down, ſcarcely able to utter a word; but, having applied her ſalts, ſhe ſomewhat recovered; and, thanking Miſs Hampden for her affectionate concern, ſhe imputed her illneſs to the length of the walk ſhe had taken. Miſs Hampden adviſed her to lie down on the bed, telling her, ſhe would ſend

ſomebody

ſomebody with breakfaſt for her. Maria acceded to her propoſal, but without hope of mental eaſe or refreſhment.

As ſoon as breakfaſt was over in the parlour, Lady Melmoth accompanied Miſs Hampden to ſpeak to Maria; who, when her ladyſhip came into the room, was, with the aſſiſtance of a ſervant, making ſome alterations in her dreſs. Lady Melmoth concluded from this circumſtance, and the air of ſpirit with which ſhe forced herſelf to appear, that ſhe was much better; and, when ſhe had diſmiſſed the attendant, ſaid to her—

"My dear Miſs Mordaunt, if it will be agreeable to you, we will take a ride as far as Davenhill Park this morning. Ever ſince you told me your relationſhip to that family, I have been impatient to introduce you to Lady Davenhill; who, I think, if I have any penetration, is too liberal minded, and too

too good a woman, not to pay proper reſpect to ſo amiable a part of her lord's family. And I doubt not but ſhe will be anxious to make amends to you, for the unkindneſs of Lord Davenhill's conduct to your father."

At another time, doubts and fears of what reception ſhe might have from Lady Davenhill, would have made the idea of this viſit irkſome to Maria; but her mind now only ſeemed to be capable of admitting unhappineſs from one quarter; and was totally unconcerned, whether ſhe was going to experience gentle or harſh treatment at Davenhill Park, any otherwiſe, than that the former would afford her an opportunity of conſulting Lady Davenhill, how ſhe ſhould act in her preſent critical ſituation; for it immediately occurred to her, that her ladyſhip's advice and protection might, at this time, be of peculiar ſervice to her; as ſhe had prohibited

bited herſelf from revealing her diſtreſs to any one who was at all connected with Aubrey's family. She anſwered, therefore, by thanking Lady Melmoth for the lively concern ſhe took in her welfare; and ſaid, ſhe would gladly attend her ladyſhip.

"I am pleaſed," replied Lady Melmoth, "that you ſo readily agree to my propoſal; as, I think, if you are not already too much fatigued, the air and exerciſe will be of ſervice to you. My brother was apprehenſive your ſpirits might be too much agitated with this viſit; imagining, I ſuppoſe, that you would be flurried to death, with being ſnatched from uncle to aunt, and from couſin to couſin, like poor Tom Jenkins in the Critic. But I told him, I did not expect *our family diſcovery* would be received in the way one reads of in poetry and plays; for Lady Davenhill, tho' friendly and good-humoured

moured in the extreme, has none of thoſe ardent ſenſibilities which produce affecting ſcenes. But be quick, my love, in making what alteration you intend in your dreſs; I will order the coach immediately; and, if you pleaſe, we will ſet out as ſoon as poſſible."—Maria, bowing, ſaid ſhe would obey; and her ladyſhip quitted the room.

When Maria got down ſtairs, ſhe found Lady Melmoth and Aubrey in the parlour; the former with her cloak and gloves on, ready to ſtep into the coach. At ſight of Aubrey, the heart of our fair heroine alternately melted with tenderneſs, and ſickened with the agonizing effort of ſuppreſſing hope and pleaſure. She returned his compliments of the morning with all the compoſure ſhe could command; but, dreading, leſt the ſoftneſs of his aſpect, co-operating with the tenderneſs of his voice, whilſt (as he put her into the carriage)

carriage) he inquired after her health, ſhould ſhake her reſolution, and render her unable to perform with firmneſs, what not even the faſcinating power of love could perſuade her was unneceſſary; ſhe forced herſelf to avert her eyes, in order to eſcape the dangerous magic of phyſiognomy.

The meeting on the part of Lady Davenhill was as Lady Melmoth had foretold; — friendly, kind, good-humoured. She repeatedly aſſured her fair couſin, that ſhe ſhould take pleaſure in contributing to her eſtabliſhment in life; and aſſured her, that when ſhe went to town, ſhe would introduce her to the reſt of her relations; who, ſhe doubted not, would be as happy as herſelf to receive and protect ſo amiable a part of their family.

"Yes, yes," continued ſhe, "we muſt all do ſomething towards providing for her. A ſweet girl, indeed! an elegant figure,

figure, and delicate countenance!—Yes, I remember your father extremely well, my dear; tho' it is now above twenty years ſince I ſaw him. I think you greatly reſemble him, only he had an aquiline noſe—the noſe of the Mordaunt family. I ſuppoſe you took that Grecian turn of features from your mother. Pray, was ſhe handſome?—Yes, I dare ſay;—though, as I told you before (I believe) I never ſaw her in my life; nor your father, except once with Lord Davenhill, before I was married:—it was at the time my Lord paid his addreſſes to me. I remember I ſpoke of him afterwards as a very elegant and remarkably pleaſing young man; and I have an idea, his lordſhip was a little jealous of my admiration of him; (though, I declare, without the leaſt reaſon, for I only admired him as a friend of his)—however that was—perhaps it might be jealouſy—I don't know—

know—however it was, he never again brought him to ſee me; and ſoon after our marriage, Mr. Mordaunt offended his family, by marrying a lady they did not approve of; and Lord Davenhill, among the reſt, thought proper to diſcontinue all intercourſe with him. However, I don't doubt ſhe was a very worthy and amiable woman, (for I have no prejudices reſpecting birth) from her education of her daughter; tho', without doubt, it was extremely imprudent, and very unworthy Mr. Mordaunt's great good ſenſe, to marry beneath his family, and diſoblige them all. I dare ſay, you won't do ſo, my love—no, I dare ſay you will not;—for, though you have no fortune, you may match extremely well, ſpringing from ſo ancient and honourable a houſe, and poſſeſſing that beautiful perſon."—Here her ladyſhip pauſed to take breath; but Maria could make

make no anſwer. The mention of her parents had ſwelled her heart with renewed grief for their loſs, and brought tears to her eyes.

Lady Melmoth replied to her ladyſhip, "that the delicacy of Miſs Mordaunt's ſentiments, and the graceful circumſpection of her conduct, left her without a doubt, that her actions would always reflect honour upon the houſe to which ſhe was allied."

"Oh, I don't doubt it in the leaſt," returned Lady Davenhill; "I am ſure your ladyſhip's good opinion would be a ſufficient recommendation of any perſon to me; much more a relation of my Lord's. For, as I was obſerving the other day to Lady Alford, ſpeaking of your ladyſhip's penetration, that you ſeemed to take in every thing at one glance—But come, my dear child; I am afraid I have lowered your ſpirits by talking of your parents; but do not

deſpair

deſpair of finding protectors in your ſurviving relatives, that will have your intereſt at heart. I am ſure I can anſwer for one, at leaſt:"—and ſo ſaying, ſhe affectionately kiſſed her cheek.

Maria, affected by the kindneſs of this laſt ſentence, returned her ladyſhip's ſalute with a feeling of grateful tenderneſs, that ſeemed highly to gratify the kind heart of Lady Davenhill. And, when Lady Melmoth roſe to take her leave, ſhe inſiſted that Maria ſhould ſpend the remainder of that day, and the enſuing night, at Davenhill Park. Lady Melmoth ſaid, ſhe could not think of parting with her gueſt even to Lady Davenhill, without a promiſe that they would both ſpend the next day with her:—this invitation was accepted; and her ladyſhip returned home, full of the moſt pleaſing reflections on the ſucceſs of her benevolent viſit. One alloy, notwithſtanding, ſhe

felt to her content, from recollecting the diſappointment her brother would feel, on her returning without her fair friend:—but, comforting herſelf with the thought, that this temporary diſappointment would be a ſource of future ſatisfaction, ſhe recounted to him and to Miſs Hampden, with much delight, the occurrence of the morning; well aſſured, ſhe was communicating equal pleaſure to them by the intelligence.

## CHAP. XVI.

WHEN Lady Melmoth was gone, Lady Davenhill perceiving our gentle heroine look penſive and melancholy, with the hope of amuſing her, carried her to view the houſe; and, taking her into a gallery which contained the family pictures, gave her little hiſtorical accounts of the moſt remarkable perſonages, whoſe portraits were depoſited there. But Maria was incapable of receiving pleaſure from that, which at another time would have afforded her the moſt pleaſing ſenſations. Engroſſed by far different thoughts than tracing the actions of her anceſtors, ſhe ſometimes ſuffered her attention

tion to relax, whilſt they were recounted to her, inſomuch that Lady Davenhill could not but perceive it; and it is a doubt whether ſhe would not have been ſeriouſly diſguſted at her ſeeming want of reſpect for her illuſtrious relatives, (which, notwithſtanding the liberality of ſentiment with reſpect to birth ſhe had profeſſed, ſhe begun to fear proceeded from the diſproportionate alliance of her parents) had not an incident, which quickly occurred, intereſted her pity and good-nature, and unfolded to her another cauſe for the apparent neglect.

Maria, after ſtanding ſome minutes looking at a picture that recalled to her mind the features of her father, burſt into tears — which, her ladyſhip perceiving, inquired what occaſioned her emotion.

"Alas! Madam," exclaimed Maria, "that portrait brought my fa-

ther's countenance and form ſo ſtrongly to my remembrance, and renewed my grief for the loſs of one of the tendereſt parents and wiſeſt counſellors that ever daughter poſſeſſed, with a force, that not even my preſent happineſs in your ladyſhip's ſociety could reſtrain."

"My good child," returned her ladyſhip, "I love your filial reverence and affection. Be comforted;—I hope you will find many kind relations. For my own part, though I have not, nor pretend to, the wiſdom of your parent, I have a heart that is intereſted in your welfare; and you may at all times command my advice and aſſiſtance to the extent of my power and abilities."

Maria, ſoothed by theſe kind expreſſions, wiſhed to accept the offered counſel; and to eaſe, in ſome degree, her heart, by revealing to her new-found friend its diſtreſſes.

"Believe

"Believe me, Madam," ſhe replied, "I have the moſt lively ſenſe of your kindneſs:—and your advice, whenever you ſhall be pleaſed to honour me withit, will always be received with the higheſt gratitude. But never, I think—never, in any part of my future life—can I ſtand ſo much in need of the advice of a judicious, kind, and protecting friend, as at this moment."

"At this moment, my dear child!" reiterated Lady Davenhill, ſurprized by the energy with which ſhe ſpoke; "what can at this moment ſo greatly agitate your ſpirits?—Conſider me as your friend and relation, and be not afraid to truſt me."

Thus kindly interrogated, Maria recounted to her every thing that had occurred to her ſince the deceaſe of her parents; deſcribing to her the incidents that had ariſen to give Aubrey oppor-

tunities of revealing to her the paſſion with which ſhe had inſpired him; and the peculiar ſituations which had diſcovered to him, that ſhe did not perceive it with indifference. Whilſt Maria related to Lady Davenhill her laſt converſation with Aubrey, the eyes of the latter ſpoke the higheſt pleaſure, at the proſpect of an alliance ſo honourable and pleaſing in every reſpect.

"Yes, yes," exclaimed ſhe haſtily, without waiting for the ſubſequent particulars Maria had to communicate; "yes, circumſtanced as you were, I think you acted rightly.—I am of opinion you could not well avoid giving him ſome ſort of promiſe you meant to accept his offer; for you had at that time apparently no one whoſe advice you were at all obliged to abide by; and even had you been protected by your family, you could have had no fear that any part of it would have objected

jected to ſo advantageous a matrimonial eſtabliſhment;—yes, yes, as things were, 'twas all very well.—Well, my love, go on if you pleaſe."

Maria continued her narrative, but her feelings during the melancholy recital frequently obliged her to ſuſpend her diſcourſe for many minutes.

Lady Davenhill ſaid every thing ſhe conceived likely to conſole or comfort her, though greatly mortified herſelf by the diſappointment the cruel incidents ſhe related occaſioned her.

When Maria had, at length, diſburthened her heart of the ſad and weighty particulars, her ladyſhip replied, with an aſpect of much concern—"I don't know any young man of faſhion of the preſent age, whoſe character I had, till now, a greater reſpect for than Mr. Aubrey's; nor any one to whom I ſhould have been happier to have ſeen a relation of mine united.

His ſituation has long been a pitiable one, in my eſtimation, notwithſtanding I have been told the follies of his early youth were the occaſion of it. There is no one can make greater allowances for the follies of inexperience than myſelf; but a deliberate act of perfidy is never to be excuſed or palliated.—No, my good child, you muſt never think of him again;—for even ſuppoſing he had violated no promiſes to another, I could not bear the idea of ſeeing you married to a man who kept a miſtreſs; inevitable miſery muſt, in ſuch a caſe, be your portion; therefore, my dear child, ſummon all your reſolution, and let not this diſappointment ſink your ſpirits;—think of him as unworthy your regard, and baniſh him from your memory."

"Lady Davenhill," thought Maria, "ſpeaks wiſely, prudently, good-naturedly; but ſhe ſpeaks not with the

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air and expreſſions of one who can conceive what a heart formed for love muſt ſuffer in renouncing the object it adored."

But, with due deference to the ſoliloquy of our fair heroine, her ladyſhip was perhaps one of the beſt adviſers ſhe could have conſulted on the occaſion; far preferable to one who would have more feelingly ſympathized. For the fear leſt ſhe ſhould be ſuppoſed to indulge a poignant and fruitleſs regret, which ſhe knew her ladyſhip would deem the extremity of weakneſs and folly, if not of guilt, made Maria earneſtly endeavour to *reply* with ſpirit and reſolution; and, in ſtriving for the appearance of theſe, at the moment, ſhe actually rouſed the feelings ſhe wiſhed to diſplay.

"Truſt me, Madam," ſaid ſhe, "I need no monitor to tell me that I ought to give up the idea of an union with

Mr. Aubrey. I only want to be taught how I may beſt effect my firm purpoſe."

"Yes, I ſee you are a good girl," ſaid her ladyſhip haſtily, and pleaſed with the manner in which ſhe ſpoke; "and there can be no difficulty, my love, in breaking off a connection of this ſort, with pleas ſo ſtrong to juſtify your conduct.—I myſelf will ſpeak my opinion on the ſubject to Mr. Aubrey, if you chuſe it."

"Pardon me, but your ladyſhip forgets," ſaid Maria, "that I have promiſed not to communicate to him the *cauſe* of my refuſal;—alas! it is that conſideration which occaſions my preſent perplexity and diſtreſs."

"True, true," returned Lady Davenhill, "that is true; but it had ſlipped my memory.—I have a thought (continued her ladyſhip, after a pauſe) how to adjuſt this matter for the preſent.

ſent. I am under the neceſſity of going to town, upon urgent buſineſs, within a week from this time; I will ſet out a day or two hence, and take you with me; by this means you will be removed from the ſight of an object that muſt now be very unpleaſant. If Mr. Aubrey urges you to let him viſit or write to you at my houſe, you may refuſe both, by ſaying you do not chuſe I ſhould be made acquainted with his ſentiments reſpecting you, till the time arrives when he may, without offending propriety, avow his wiſhes, and make known his intentions to your family. This interim will afford time for us to form an excuſe for your totally rejecting his propoſals."

This plan was by nó means ſatisfactory to Maria. She hated the idea of a temporiſing act of duplicity, though innocently deſigned; and would have experienced far leſs perturbation, ha

a ſcheme been thought of for her immediately putting an end to his hopes. But as ſhe could ſuggeſt nothing that had a more plauſible appearance, ſhe was conſtrained to acquieſce in her ladyſhip's propoſal.

"I am truly grateful to your ladyſhip for the patience and kindneſs with which you liſten to my difficulties," ſhe replied, "and the earneſtneſs with which you ſtrive to find a way to extricate me from them. Indeed, Madam, the plan you have propoſed ſeems to me the only one I can adopt; and I ſubmit myſelf entirely to your conduct and direction in the affair."

"I am obliged to you, my dear, for the confidence you repoſe in me; and to-morrow, then, we will make known to Lady Melmoth our deſign of going to town."

Lady Davenhill now (thinking to relieve the ſpirits of our amiable heroine) turned

turned the converſation upon topics very remote from the buſineſs of this hiſtory. And we therefore deem the preſent a favourable opportunity to put a period to this chapter.

CHAP.

## CHAP. XVII.

WHEN Lady Davenhill's carriage drove into the court-yard of Dunlough Caſtle the next day, Aubrey, who had ſtood at one of the windows almoſt the whole morning, waiting their arrival, ran eagerly to the coach door. As he took Maria's hand, the expreſſion of delight that illumined his eyes, increaſed the anguiſh of her heart; and an icy chillneſs ſeemed to creep through her veins, as he led her into the room where Lady Melmoth waited to receive them. Maria ſeated herſelf in the corner of a ſopha on which Miſs Hampden ſat, and began to enter into converſation with her. Aubrey took a chair, and placed himſelf

himſelf beſide them. Their firſt compliments over, Lady Davenhill ſaid, with a ſmile of infinite good-humour,—"I muſt again thank your ladyſhip for introducing my little couſin to me; indeed I am ſo much pleaſed with her company, that, being obliged to go to town in a few days, upon buſineſs of conſequence, I have requeſted her to go with me: and ſhe has kindly promiſed to make the ſacrifice of leaving your ladyſhip's ſociety, to gratify my wiſhes. A ſacrifice for which I am, and know I ought to be, extremely grateful; as I am fully ſenſible of the pleaſure ſhe gives up, to ſhow her reſpectful attention to my deſire."

"Your ladyſhip is flatteringly polite," ſaid Lady Melmoth, bowing; "but, I beg leave to aſſure you, I ſhall always experience a high degree of pleaſure, in the reflection of having been the inſtrument of introducing two ladies

ladies of ſo much real worth to each other. And, though I ſhall feel the moſt ſincere regret in parting with Miſs Mordaunt, before the time ſhe had obligingly promiſed to ſpend with me is expired; yet it will be a conſoling pleaſure to me to think, that ſhe is cementing a family union, which, I have no doubt, will be productive of laſting ſatisfaction."

"And are we indeed to loſe you ſo ſoon as within two or three days, my dear Miſs Mordaunt!" exclaimed Miſs Hampden. "Do me the juſtice to believe, that I ſhall feelingly lament the ſeparation; and that my mind will frequently recur, with friendly anticipation, to our meeting in town in the winter."

During the converſation reſpecting her journey, Maria kept her eyes conſtantly fixed on one or other of the ladies, in order to avoid thoſe of Aubrey, who

who looked ſedulouſly on her face the whole time.

"You are very kind," ſaid Maria, anſwering to Miſs Hampden's expreſſions of concern at the thought of her departure;—"you are very kind. I ſhall return with Lady Davenhill this evening to Davenhill Park, as her ladyſhip means to ſet out the day after to-morrow; but truſt me, my dear Miſs Hampden, that my feelings of regret will live till we meet again."

Aubrey, who from the moment Lady Davenhill firſt mentioned her intention of taking Maria to town, had been ſo wholly abſorbed by emotions of ſurprize and diſappointment, that he had not even had recollection or command of himſelf ſufficient to pay the common compliments uſual on ſuch occaſions—now putting his hand on hers, as it lay on the arm of the ſopha, ſaid, with a look of interrogation,—"Are you

you indeed abſolutely determined to go?"

"Moſt aſſuredly I ſhall not diſappoint Lady Davenhill."

"Can you then feel for no one's diſappointment but Lady Davenhill's?" returned he, with a look of reſentment and mortification;—"but why ſhould I expect miracles wrought in my favour;—caprice governs the world."

Here he roſe from his chair.—

"Surely," ſaid Maria, "I have done nothing to deſerve that ſarcaſm, Mr. Aubrey.—I really do not underſtand you."

"Done nothing!" reiterated Aubrey, in an agitated, but under tone of voice;—"the only thing in the world that could make me moſt miſerable! Are not you tearing yourſelf from my ſight in the moſt abrupt and cruel manner? Good God! how can you have

the

the heart to wear a face of ſuch cool diſtracting indifference?"

Maria, who feared, though they ſat at a diſtant part of the room, that their converſation ſhould be overheard, to put a ſtop to it, was now moving away from him.

"No! do not ſtir!" ſaid he; I will leave the room immediately. I feel this is no place for me at preſent.—Unkind, unfeeling Maria!"

So ſaying, he abruptly departed, leaving her a prey to the moſt painful emotions. She ſtrove, however, to repel her grief for the diſtreſs ſhe was neceſſitated to inflict, by oppoſing the cauſe ſhe had to blame his conduct;—but the former was the ſenſation that kept ſtrongeſt poſſeſſion of her breaſt, notwithſtanding ſhe determined to act as if the latter deſpotically ruled it.

Soon after Aubrey had quitted the room,

room, Lady Davenhill ſaid, addreſſing herſelf to Lady Melmoth—

"I promiſe myſelf great pleaſure, when I go to town, in being introduced to Dr. Edgeware and his ſiſter. The amiable and ſtriking light in which Miſs Mordaunt has placed the character of the former, has intereſted me extremely. Indeed he ſeems to be a favourite hero of Maria's; I proteſt, if he was thirty years younger, I don't know whether I ſhould not ſuſpect ſhe was abſolutely in love with him.—But *apropos!* now I am talking of going to town, had you not better, my dear, give directions before dinner about having your cloaths packed up, as you are to go back with me in the evening."

Some affectionate compliments now paſſed between Maria and Lady Melmoth, reſpecting the precipitate departure of the former; after which, our fair heroine gladly obeyed the ſuggeſtion

geſtion of Lady Davenhill, and retired to make the neceſſary preparations for her journey.

## CHAP. XVIII.

ON quitting the drawing-room, Maria recollected ſhe had left her work-bag in the breakfaſt parlour, and went down ſtairs to ſeek it. On opening the door, ſhe was greatly diſconcerted to perceive Aubrey there; and would have retired when ſhe had found what ſhe went to look for, had he not, with the moſt impaſſioned intreaties, begged her to ſtay a few moments.

"Have

"Have you yet," cried he, "repented of your unjuſtifiable cruelty in leaving me? Ah, Maria, how could I have expected this conduct from you!"

"Surely," replied Maria, "you cannot call my obedience to the deſire of Lady Davenhill unjuſtifiable!—Oh, Mr. Aubrey, a moment's reflection ought to reconcile you to this ſeparation, by convincing you of its propriety on many accounts."

"May I write to you?"

"By no means, at preſent."

"Good God! what is your motive for all this ſeverity? You certainly regard me with the moſt perfect indifference, or you could not thus unreaſonably refuſe every requeſt I make.—Why do you treat me ſo unkindly?"

Maria knew not at firſt how to reply:—the confuſion into which this embarraſſing and ſo much dreaded interview had thrown her, prevented her

from recollecting, for ſome moments, the deception Lady Davenhill had inſtructed her to practiſe;—but at laſt ſhe replied;

"If any accident ſhould lead Lady Davenhill to ſuſpect that I receive letters from you, ſhe would think it ſtrange that I ſhould hold a correſpondence with you which I thought neceſſary to conceal from her; and I would not willingly do you ſo great an injury in her eſtimation, as to tell her you had already avowed a partiality for me. You have too much penetration, I am ſure, not to have perceived enough of her Ladyſhip's turn of mind, to make you fear ſhe would prove no favourable confidant."

"I think," replied Aubrey, "that Lady Davenhill has not a ſoul formed to enter into the poignant emotions of a heart affected with a violent paſſion. But can there be a woman, my deareſt Maria!

Maria! endowed with ſo little of her ſex's ſoftneſs as to hear, without ſome degree of compaſſion (though ſhe might blame) the imprudencies of an attachment ardent as mine, operating upon a being ſo diſtreſſingly ſituated? Muſt new friends ever ſupplant former ones? Oh! why, Maria, this earneſt deſire to quit the ſociety of thoſe whoſe affections time and knowledge of your merits have rendered more firmly yours?"

"Can you think it unnatural—can you wonder, Mr. Aubrey," replied ſhe, "that an hapleſs orphan like myſelf, whoſe life has been marked by diſtreſſes ſo affectingly peculiar, ſhould rejoice at the proſpect of being received into the protecting boſom of her family?

Here ſhe would have departed; but Aubrey, touched by the pathetic manner in which ſhe alluded to her ſorrows, now lamented that he had ſpoken with

ſo

ſo much petulance; and endeavoured by every ſoothing art to prevail upon her to ſtay. Maria liſtened, till tenderneſs had almoſt effaced from her ſoftened mind all traces of his faults; but on his uttering the words—"*I am ſenſible I have no pretenſions to your preference, but thoſe which a heart incapable of change gives to its poſſeſſor*"—the keenneſs with which memory brought to her imagination his infidelity to the fair mourner ſhe had ſo lately ſeen, renewed the painful impreſſion in its full force; and, diſregarding his intreaties to the contrary, ſhe diſengaged herſelf from him, and taking up the work-bag which had unluckily been the occaſion of her viſiting the parlour, haſtily left the room, mentally exclaiming (with a ſigh of anguiſh) from Milton:

"That ſuch reſemblance of truth and virtue
"Should yet remain, where faith and real'ty
"Are not!"——

## CHAP. XIX.

AS Maria went up the ſtair-caſe, ſhe heard the ſound of a carriage, and the bell at the gate of the caſtle ring; and rejoicing that ſhe had eſcaped ſeeing viſitors, haſtened to her own apartment, where, plunged in a deep reverie on her unfortunate ſituation, ſhe remained for above an hour, totally unmindful of the occaſion for which ſhe had quitted the drawing-room.

She was thus ſitting when ſomebody rapped at her door; Maria, wiping haſtily ſome tears from her eyes, roſe and opened it. It was Miſs Hampden, who entered, eagerly exclaiming, "Do I interrupt you?—Can you let me in?"

—I have

—I have much that I wiſh to tell you."

"You do not interrupt me indeed—pray come in, my dear Miſs Hampden.—You have been weeping, I perceive by your eyes;—you appear extremely agitated; and yet, if I may judge from your countenance, not painfully ſo:—I aſſure you, I am greatly intereſted."

"You judge rightly, I *have* been ſhedding tears; but they were thoſe of ſweet and tender reconciliation.—But ſuffer me to ſit down and recover myſelf a little," ſaid ſhe, flinging herſelf into a chair, "for at preſent I am almoſt inclined to doubt the evidence of my ſenſes—I will tell you all in a few minutes."

Loſing, at the inſtant, her own concerns in thoſe of her friend, Maria ſeated herſelf beſide Miſs Hampden; and, affectionately preſſing one of her hands,

with tender anxiety waited for her communication.

"Oh! I have had, my dear Miſs Mordaunt, ſo unlooked for, but ſo welcome a viſiter!" cried ſhe—"Mrs. Herbert is in the houſe!—Kind! affectionate! friendly! as I formerly knew her.—Oh, you cannot conceive the joy that has entered my heart within this half hour!—but I muſt tell you the particulars minutely."

"I ſhall be rejoiced to ſhare in your happineſs," ſaid Maria, perceiving her greatly agitated; "but let me beg you to ſpare your recital, for your own ſake, till your ſpirits are more collected."

"I ſhall be compoſed in a few minutes," returned Miſs Hampden, burſting into tears; and, after having thus given eaſe to her heart, ſhe related to our fair heroine as follows:

"When Mrs. Herbert's name was announced, you may imagine the agitation

tion into which I was thrown. I haſtened down ſtairs, my heart beating with a quick ſucceſſion of mixed emotions. The moment I entered the room, Mrs. Herbert, with looks of tender complacency, ſtepped forward, and opened her arms to receive me. Rejoiced *thus* to meet my benefactreſs, without waiting to have the cauſe of the alteration explained, I flew towards her, and, eagerly claſping her neck, all the little hoard of reſentment I had in her abſence treaſured up, melted away through my eyes. Mrs. Herbert ſeemed no leſs affected; and we ſpent ſome minutes in a ſilent intercourſe of tears and embraces. — Mrs. Herbert firſt broke ſilence.

"Oh! my dear Emilia," cried ſhe, "can you forgive the aſperity with which I have treated you?—Can you forget my hard, unkind neglect?"

"Mention it no more, my deareſt Madam!" I returned; "to meet you thus affectionately kind, convinces me that you have diſcovered the miſtaken opinion you had formed of my conduct; and repays me for all the ſorrows I have experienced!"

"Oh Emilia!" cried Mrs. Herbert, "greatly indeed have you been wronged! greatly indeed has your generous ſpirit been traduced! But I will tell you all—I owe you that explanation, that you may not think my behaviour altogether without apology; though I confeſs I ought to have known you better than to have believed you capable of ſo ſuddenly deviating from your natural habits of ingenuouſneſs and ſincerity. The peculiar ſituation of my mind at that period, is all that can in the ſmalleſt degree plead my exuſe. You know the confidence I have

have for many years repoſed in my favourite woman, *Wilford*; you know I had the ſtrongeſt reliance on her ſteady regard to her word, and the ſtrict integrity of her actions; and will therefore the leſs wonder I ſhould give ear to her, when ſhe artfully ſuggeſted to me that you encouraged the addreſſes of Lord Henry, when ſhe aſſured me ſhe had ſeen letters privately delivered to you from him; and that ſhe had overheard you, in a converſation with my nephew in the garden, ridicule my growing approbation of Colonel Herbert; to this information *Wilford* added many aggravating particulars. You, Emilia, who ſo well know the warmth of my temper, will not wonder it took fire at theſe ſuggeſtions. I kept the flame, however, concealed in my own breaſt for ſome days, determined not to come to an open diſſention till I had *myſelf* made further diſ-

coveries; and the ſeeing a letter delivered to you in ſo ſuſpicious a manner, confirmed in my mind, beyond a doubt, the intelligence *Wilford* had infuſed into it. 'Twas this which actuated my reſentment towards you, the morning you received that letter; which has occaſioned you ſo many troubles, and me ſo much regret. Nor till a very ſhort time ago did I diſcover how greatly I had been impoſed upon, and my dear Emilia injured.

Some months after the death of Colonel Herbert, *Wilford* happened to fall ſick, and was for ſome days confined to her bed with a delirious fever, which ſo weakened her nerves that, after ſhe was out of danger, her ſpirits were frequently ſunk and depreſſed to an extreme degree. In theſe fits of *nervous* horrors I believe all the ill ſhe had done in her life uſed to occur, in the moſt glaring colours, to her perturbed

turbed imagination. Under the influence of thoſe terrors, ſhe came to me and confeſſed, with much ſelf-reproach and many tears, that ſhe had taken a bribe from Colonel Herbert (who was fearful you would be a bar to his marrying me) to hint to me that you encouraged the addreſſes of Lord Henry; and that ſhe had overheard you, in a converſation with his Lordſhip in the garden, ſay you were ſure I ſhould accept Colonel Herbert's offer; and ridicule, with infinite mirth, the violence of my grief for the loſs of Mr. G—."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Maria, "how ſeverely muſt it wound the feelings of your friend, to make ſo humiliating a confeſſion of the conduct of her late huſband!"

"I don't know," returned Miſs Hampden, "I don't know; but I am inclined to think, her ſtrong opinion

that the violence of his affection for her prompted him to act for *once* againſt the generoſity of his *nature*, prevented her from feeling any poignant mortification in making the communication.—But to proceed.

"Nothing," continued Mrs. Herbert, "but the weak and emaciated ſtate in which I ſaw this miſerable woman could have reſtrained me from giving way to the impetuoſity of my feelings on the occaſion. I commanded her inſtantly to leave my preſence, determined to diſmiſs her from my houſe. The moment ſhe had left me, I ſat down in a ſtate of mind you may conceive, though I want words to deſcribe it, and wrote immediately to your father, incloſing a letter to you. I waited with extreme impatience the return of the poſt, which brought me an account from Mr. Hampden, that you had left him ſome time, and were

ſettled

ſettled with Lady M——, to whoſe country ſeat (where you then were) he had ſent my letter. After waiting a fortnight without receiving an anſwer, (ſo ardently did I wiſh a reconciliation; ſo earneſtly did I long to convince you of the impoſition which had been practiſed upon me) I reſolved to viſit you in perſon, as I thought I had not expreſſed myſelf with ſufficient force in writing.—But this journey was retarded awhile by the arrival of a letter from the Ducheſs of C——, requeſting me to ſpend the enſuing month in ——ſhire; adding, as an inducement, that ſhe expected her ſon Henry to return from abroad in the courſe of the month. This piece of information, ſome time before, would have prevented me from going; for I knew the diſlike my nephew had taken to me on your account; but it had now a quite contrary effect, as I had

determined not to contradict, but rather abet his ſentiments reſpecting you, if they continued the ſame as when he left England. And this, my dear Emilia, I ſpeedily found to be the caſe, by the coldneſs, and even diſguſt, with which he looked upon me when I firſt ſaw him. He ſolicitouſly ſought an opportunity of ſpeaking to me when I was alone; and, having found it, with a ſpirit that charmed me, eagerly demanded—"Where, Madam, has your unkindneſs driven your much injured, your faithful, but too generous friend?"—Pleaſed with the generous openneſs of his heart and manners, I made haſte to inform him how greatly I had been miſled, and how earneſtly I wiſhed to make you every reparation in my power:—I told him where you were, and offered to let him accompany me in my viſit to you. He ſeemed enhanted with pleaſure; affectionately

embraced

embraced me, and expreſſed in the moſt ardent terms his gratitude for my overture. He aſſured me he left England with a full determination, when he became of age, to *renew* the propoſals he had made to you; that he ſtill adhered to the reſolution; and, if you accepted the offer of his hand, willing to ſhare the little he was maſter of, independent of his father, he would joyfully, for your ſake, riſk all his expectations from paternal bounty.

I invited him to ſpend a few weeks with me in Wales; and, as ſoon as the time I had propoſed to ſpend with them was expired, with permiſſion of the Duke and Ducheſs, he left ——ſhire with me; but inſtead of travelling into Wales, we journied immediately to this place. Lord Henry is now waiting at an inn in the town for the permiſſion to viſit you; and if my dear Emilia thinks as rightly of my nephew

as his tried conſtancy and merits deſerve, ſhe ſhould, and I am of opinion ſhe will, commiſſion one of my ſervants to invite him hither. What ſay you, my dear girl?"

"Judge, my dear Miſs Mordaunt, how ſoothing, how conſolatory to my wounded heart, was the information ſhe gave me of Lord Henry's ſpirited conduct! Think with what lively and tender gratitude, the friendly warmth with which my benefactreſs had acted, inſpired me! This ſudden and unexpected turn in my affairs, had nearly overcome my ſpirits, till my tears, which fell plenteouſly on her neck, relieved them.—"Oh, my deareſt Madam!" I exclaimed;—"if *you* approve, if *you* recommend, can *I* object? Ah! it was what I thought would be your *deſire*, your *will*, I followed at the time I *rejected* what you now encourage me to *accept*." Mrs. Herbert anſwered,

ſwered, by again affectionately preſſing me in her arms; and after having given vent to the tender ſenſations which roſe to her heart, ſhe rang the bell, and diſpatched a meſſage to Lord Henry. I now begged ſhe would permit me to introduce her to my honoured friend, Lady Melmoth; and, going into another apartment, I ſent to requeſt the favour of ſpeaking with her ladyſhip; ſhe haſtened to me immediately, and I ſuccinctly related to her every thing that had happened. I need not deſcribe to you how ſincerely ſhe rejoiced with me;—ſhe deſired me inſtantly to lead her to my friend; to whom, with her natural politeneſs, ſhe gave a moſt hoſpitable and elegant welcome to her houſe, and they entered into a converſation which laſted till Lord Henry was announced; when Lady Melmoth, after paying her compliments to his Lordſhip, withdrew.

The

The moment ſhe had quitted the room, Lord Henry exclaimed, with the moſt impaſſioned utterance, turning to Mrs. Herbert, "Oh, Madam, let me intreat you to inform me at once what I have to hope? Will my adored Miſs Hampden now condeſcend to accept my hand, now that my offer is ſeconded by your ſolicitation? Is ſhe ſtill inexorable? or has my never-ceaſing attachment wrought any ſenſibility in my favour?"

To this (after the converſation I had with Mrs. Herbert) I did not heſitate to reply,—"The reſerve, my Lord, I formerly impoſed upon myſelf, I now diſclaim. You are arrived at an age, when your own inclinations, if founded on virtue, have a right to ſuperſede parental authority. *I* have no friend but what would rejoice in my acceptance of your generous offer. My earlieſt friend, my kind benefactreſs, even

*ſolicits*

*ſolicits* me to accept it. Thus ſanctioned, let me frankly confeſs,—I feel the moſt lively ſenſibility to your lordſhip's merits; and, if it is in my power to contribute to your happineſs, it will ever be my pleaſure, my pride, and my glory to do ſo."

Lord Henry, with tears of rapture, thanked me for this confeſſion with the warmeſt encomiums. My tears flowed faſt;—the ſcene became too affecting. I begged they would ſuffer me to retire to recover myſelf; and I have uſed the opportunity I with difficulty obtained, to fly to my dear Miſs Mordaunt, whoſe feeling heart, I knew, would take as lively an intereſt in my joys, as it had before done in my ſorrows.

Though the ſpirits of Maria were ſunk to ſadneſs by her own affliction, her heart yet took a lively joy in the

happineſs

happineſs of her friend; and ſhe warmly expreſſed her feelings on the occaſion.

Maria, after buſying herſelf in the little avocations which ſhe had left the company of Lady Melmoth and Lady Davenhill to perform, went down ſtairs with Miſs Hampden, who, in the moſt friendly manner, introduced her to Mrs. Herbert and Lord Henry. And they ſoon after joined Lady Melmoth and Lady Davenhill in the drawing-room.

Maria contrived the whole day to give Aubrey no opportunity of ſpeaking to her alone; but in the evening, as he handed her to Lady Davenhill's carriage, he exclaimed in a low voice, —"Oh, Maria! if new connections had not altered your ſentiments, or at leaſt eſtranged your affections, you could not ſee me thus unhappy, without feeling a part of my uneaſineſs."

Our

Our fair heroine made ſome inarticulate anſwer—bowed—and, drawing back her head to conceal her emotion, was driven away.

## CHAP. XX.

THE day after they arrived in town, Lady Davenhill and Maria viſited Dr. Edgeware. The Doctor had been previouſly informed, by letter, of the change in her affairs; ſo that nothing new remained to be told.

"I feel myſelf under great obligations to you, Doctor," ſaid Lady Davenhill, "for your kindneſs to my little

tle friend; and was impatient for the honour of being known to a character ſo diſtinguiſhed for worth and talents."

The Doctor bowed to her ladyſhip; and Maria began to expreſs her gratitude for the friendſhip and protection he had ſhewn towards her; but he interrupted her by ſaying,—

"Theſe thanks, good child, are unneceſſary.—I have been of ſome ſervice to you. When you had no home, you were welcome to mine. Should that ever chance to be the caſe again, you ſhall be equally welcome; at preſent I am pleaſed to loſe you."

Mrs. Tonto now came in; and having paid her compliments to Lady Davenhill, congratulated Maria on her having been introduced to her ladyſhip.

"How exquiſitely I ſhould have enjoyed your firſt interview," cried ſhe; it muſt have been a moſt ſentimental

ſcene!

ſcene! But happy was it for me, perhaps, that I did not; I fear I ſhould have been too intenſely affected; and might have felt the effects of it upon my nerves for many weeks. Oh, ſurely the ſufferings of people of feeling are not to be imagined but by the *feeling!*

"Now you ſpeak of feeling, Madam," cried Lady Davenhill, "it reminds me that I have a box to-morrow night for the tragedy of the Diſtreſſed Mother. If you are not otherwiſe engaged, will you and Dr. Edgeware do us the honour of going with us?"

The Doctor and Mrs. Tonto aſſented; and at the appointed time Lady Davenhill called upon them. Mrs. Tonto had ſcarcely ſtepped into the coach, when ſhe put her hand into her pocket, and ſuddenly exclaimed,—"What a bad memory I have! I beg your ladyſhip's pardon, but I muſt trouble

trouble you to wait a minute or two"— (then calling to her maid, who ſtood in the hall) " Jenny, go and fetch me another pocket handkerchief. You can have no idea, ladies, how much I was diſtreſſed the laſt time I went to ſee the ——— perform, for want of a *third* handkerchief; I wetted one to that degree with my tears, that I am poſitive water might have been ſqueezed out of it; and the other was ſo extremely damp, that I caught a ſore throat by throwing it round my neck as I went out of the houſe. Perhaps I may have no occaſion to uſe a *third* handkerchief to-night. I don't know how it may be, but I think it beſt to prepare. It is moſt probable, however, I ſhall not weep ſo much, though the tragedy we are going to ſee is extremely affecting; but, I know not how it is, no actreſs has ſo extraordinary a power over me as the ———; for, if

you will believe me, I have ſuch a ſympathy for what ſhe is going to ſay, that the moment I ſpy the corner of her black petticoat, I always burſt into a flood of tears."

"A very extraordinary effect, indeed, Madam," ſaid Lady Davenhill, archly ſmiling at Maria; who, ſick of the *ſentimental* jargon ſhe had juſt heard, and to prevent Mrs. Tonto from engroſſing the converſation, aſked Dr. Edgeware if he thought the character of Andromache would be ably performed?

"The noble ſimplicity," returned he, "of Miſs Younge's figure and deportment, the varied expreſſion of her countenance, and the unlimited and enchanting powers of her voice and action, place it beyond a doubt, that ſhe will be an admirable, an inimitable repreſentative of the wife of Hector. With a conception of character the moſt clear

clear and comprehenſive, this excellent actreſs poſſeſſes an enthuſiaſm ſo ſtrong and elevated, that from her firſt entrance to her final exit, ſhe never for one moment loſes ſight of the character ſhe has aſſumed. Unpractiſed by her is that paltry art, (which always beſpeaks a mediocrity of talents) of purpoſely appearing cold, languid, and unintereſted through inferior ſcenes, in order to heighten the effect of exertion in thoſe which are called *principal.* The feelings of Miſs Younge are too genuine, and her imagination too vivid, to need ſuch aids; hence, even the moſt minute parts of her truly claſſical performances, have a proportionate degree of excellence, and unite to form a *ſublime* and *beauteous whole.*

"She is indeed a charming performer," ſaid Lady Davenhill.

"Oh, I don't doubt," ſaid Mrs. Tonto, whining,—"Oh, I don't doubt

but I ſhall be extremely affected: — I tremble for my poor nerves; for my exquiſite feelings operate but too powerfully upon them."

Maria found all that the Doctor had ſaid realized.—An air of ſadneſs, mixed with a ſoft and majeſtic dignity, marked the entrance of the heroine ſo forcibly, that Maria ſpontaneouſly repeated with the tone of admiration—

" Not known a Queen by *Guards behind.*"

When, in anſwer to the ſpeech of Pyrrhus—

———" Inſpired by you,
" What would I not atchieve? Again ſhall Troy
" Riſe from its aſhes: This right arm ſhall fix
" Her ſeat of Empire; and your ſon ſhall reign—"

Andromache replies—

" Such dreams of greatneſs ſuit not my condition;
" His hopes of Empire periſhed with his FATHER—"

Miſs Younge's look, her action, the hopeleſs ſolemnity of her voice, ſunk every heart with kindred grief:—her animated change of voice, countenance, and geſture, when ſhe proceeded to apoſtrophiſe her native * country, mingling with an ardent but melancholy enthuſiaſm, the fond triumph of a heart exulting in the glory of the object of its ſofter affections—all diſplayed the moſt conſummate knowledge of the operations of a mind exalted and tender in the extreme.

The melting touches of maternal tenderneſs, in her requeſting the interceſſion of Hermione, and her expoſtulations with Pyrrhus in the third act, were beautifully deſcribed.—But the

* "No, thou imperial city, ancient Troy!
"Thou pride of Aſia, founded by the Gods;
"Never, oh never! muſt we hope to ſee
"Thoſe bulwarks riſe, which *Hector* could not guard."

bro-

broken, half-ſuffocated tone of her voice, whilſt ſhe pronounced—

"————Oh, Sir, excuſe
"The pride of royal blood, that checks my
"ſpeech—"

proclaimed the ſtruggles of a high ſoul oppreſſed, and burſting with the ſublimity of its own ſentiments.

But when Pyrrhus again menaces the life of Aſtyanax, and all hope ſeems loſt (unleſs ſhe yields to conceſſions which her exalted ſpirit diſdains) the heroic reſignation to fate with which ſhe uttered—

"Then let me die and let me go to *Hector*,"

was never equalled but by herſelf.

It is certain that Andromache never appeared ſo proudly great as when ſhe ſtooped to kneel. In Miſs Younge, this was not the attitude of humbled dignity;—it was indeed her moment of triumph.—For though her knees

bent to the earth *after* she had pronounced, with the fire of wounded royalty,—

"See how low you have reduc'd a queen!"

Yet her unsubmitting spirit shone forth with added lustre, in the graceful elevation of her head, neck, and chest. The whole audience felt the awful presence of *majesty*, and beheld Pyrrhus annihilated at the daring grandeur of her keen reproach.

Her gradual transition from the solemn and energic tone, in which she recapitulated the woes she had endured, to the tremulously pathetic break in her utterance of—

— "*If he must die*" —

formed a climax of the sublime, which never was, never can be, excelled by any actress:—for the feelings of an enlightened audience, convulsed with enchanting anguish, confessed it the unexaggerated,

unexaggerated, the genuine expreſſion of *dignified nature.*

"Oh, Sir," cried Maria, addreſſing the Doctor, "can there be any of the profeſſors of this lovely art, whoſe feelings, whoſe talents exceed thoſe of this accompliſhed favourite of the tragic muſe!"

"None," returned he; "while ſhe has this manifeſt ſuperiority over all her competitors, of being equally the object of admiration and delight, whether the roſes of Thalia or the cypreſs of Melpomene bind her poliſhed temples."

## CHAP. XXI.

IN leaving the houſe, as they were making their way through the crowd, which was extremely great, in the lobby, Maria was painfully diſturbed by ſeeing the lady, whoſe intelligence reſpecting Aubrey had occaſioned her ſo much miſery, paſs by her. The ſurprize for a minute took away all recollection, and whilſt ſhe ſtood ſtill, her party, unnoticing her inattention, mixed with the crowd; ſo that when ſhe recovered and looked around, ſhe could diſcern nothing of them. At this juncture ſhe heard her name pronounced, and ſaw Aubrey coming towards her; Maria inſtantly concluded he had attended the lady who

who had juſt paſſed her; and it ſeemed as if ſome latent hope had till then, unknown to herſelf, kept poſſeſſion of her breaſt, ſo ſtrong was the ſenſation of deſpair which overwhelmed her ſoul at that moment. The paleneſs of death ſhaded her face; her reſpiration was ſuſpended; and dewy terror hung on her brows.

"For once I am fortunate," ſaid Aubrey; "how I rejoice to have diſcovered you at this inſtant!—Permit me to protect you.—Where are your party?"

"They are gone before," ſaid Maria coldly, withdrawing from him; "I have loſt ſight of them."

"Do not alarm yourſelf; my carriage waits.—Suffer me to have the honour of conveying you home."

Maria made no direct anſwer to his offer; but haſtened towards the door on her right hand.—"They went this

way," ſaid ſhe, "and I know I ſhall meet the Doctor returning to ſeek me."

"How ſtrangely you avoid me!—tell me in what I have offended?" ſaid Aubrey; "I am convinced ſome vile machinations have been practiſed againſt me.—But, oh Maria! ſurely it is not like yourſelf to act thus myſteriouſly!—Why will you not give me an opportunity of explaining away any aſperſions that may have injured me in your opinion."

"I require, I need no explanations," returned Maria.

"No! it is that indifference which diſtracts me.—Could I ſee you to-morrow?—I have a letter in my poſſeſſion that might"—

He was interrupted by the approach of Dr. Edgeware, as they were deſcending the ſteps.

"I am glad to find my fair charge ſo

ſo well protected," ſaid he, bowing to Aubrey; "the ladies are waiting, much alarmed for your ſafety, Miſs Mordaunt."

"Till now, I ever rejoiced to meet you, Doctor," ſaid Aubrey; "but at the preſent moment you come moſt unfortunately, to deprive me of the happineſs of guarding this lady home."

"Let us haſten, Sir, if you pleaſe," ſaid Maria, "to relieve the ladies from their anxiety."

She now gave one hand to the Doctor, withdrawing the other from Aubrey, under pretence of holding up her gown, as they walked to Lady Davenhill's carriage.

"I intreat you," ſaid he, "to let me ſee you to-morrow morning;—I have many important particulars to converſe with you upon."

"I go out to-morrow morning," ſaid ſhe, "with Lady Davenhill."

"In the evening then?"

"Lady Davenhill," returned Maria reſervedly, "will have a large party, and I ſhall have no opportunity of converſing with you on a ſubject of conſequence."

"For heaven's ſake, tell me when you ſhall be diſengaged!—Oh, I have inquiries of the moſt momentous nature to make of you!—When may I ſee you?"

"Indeed I know not," ſaid Maria; and juſt then they came up to the carriage, into which, without ſaying more, ſhe haſtily ſtepped.

Aubrey paid his compliments to Lady Davenhill, and bowing to Dr. Edgeware and Mrs. Tonto, turned from the coach as it drove off.

"Pray, my dear," ſaid Lady Davenhill, "did you ſtop to ſpeak to Mr. Aubrey?"

"No,

"No, Madam; I did not meet him till after I had loſt ſight of you."

Her ladyſhip perceived, by the tone of Maria's voice, that ſomething had happened to diſturb her mind; and therefore changed the converſation, till they had ſet down Dr. Edgeware and Mrs. Tonto at their own houſe.

When they were alone, ſhe eagerly expreſſed the curioſity with which the ſuddenneſs of Aubrey's appearance in town had inſpired her. Maria deſcribed the incident of her meeting him, and her previous ſurpriſe;—to which her ladyſhip immediately replied,

"It is plain he perceives you have diſcovered ſome particulars which he wiſhed to remain concealed; and I think it might have been better, for ſome reaſons, if you had promiſed to ſee him to-morrow morning, as he talked ſo earneſtly of explanations: if he could not have exculpated himſelf,

you might at leaſt have gained an opportunity of abſolutely forbidding his addreſſes."

"Oh no!" ſaid Maria; "I am determined never to ſee him more, on any terms but thoſe of an indifferent acquaintance. Circumſtances too well convince me he can make no real exculpation; and I will not tempt him to add to his faults, by liſtening for one moment to deceitful evaſions: to-morrow I will fully inform him by letter of my ſentiments."

"But will you alledge no cauſe for your refuſal?" ſaid Lady Davenhill; "I think that will be an unprecedented conduct on ſuch an occaſion."

"His own heart will tell him the reaſon," ſaid Maria, "and I ſhall have preſerved my word, which I am reſolved not to forfeit."

After ſome farther diſcourſe on this head, in which Maria maintained her

opinion, they arrived at her ladyſhip's houſe in Berkley-ſquare.

## CHAP. XXII.

MARIA, notwithſtanding the ſhock ſhe had received, kept up her ſpirits tolerably well till ſhe had retired to her own room; but the force ſhe had put upon herſelf, whilſt in the preſence of Lady Davenhill, ſeemed to have augmented her ſtore of ſorrow; for now that ſhe was alone, the conflict of her heart burſt forth into ſighs and tears of the bitterest anguiſh.

She ſat down and attempted to write to Aubrey; but her head was ſo diſtracted, and her ideas ſo confuſed, ſhe could not conſtruct a ſingle ſentence.

She

She threw away the pen, reſolving to defer writing till the morning.

Maria roſe not till late the next day, and totally unrefreſhed by ſleep. She would have put in practice her intention of writing, but Lady Davenhill, ſeeing her ſo ill, inſiſted ſhe ſhould lay it aſide at that time, and go with her to pay two or three viſits and take an airing.—They went; and her ladyſhip kept her out till near their uſual hour of dining; ſo that Maria was again obliged to poſtpone writing her letter till the evening.

But the cloth was ſcarcely removed, when ſhe received a letter, which ſhe immediately perceived came from Aubrey. She took it haſtily from the ſervant; and, forgetting the conditions ſhe had impoſed upon herſelf, with tremulous impatience was going to break the ſeal; but recollecting herſelf, and ſtopping her hand, ſhe waited till the

the man had left the room, when, dropping it on the table, she exclaimed with emotion—"No, no! I will return it unopened, with the letter I mean to send him."

"No, my dear child," said Lady Davenhill, "that is surely acting too precipitately;—by all means read the letter;—let us judge no one without hearing his vindication;—yes, I beg you will read it."

"I cannot open it, Madam; indeed I cannot," returned Maria; "I could not bear to see him descend to gloss facts by frivolous evasions.—Oh! the memory of what I once thought him, steals o'er my fancy like the first recollection of a charming vision, that is for ever flown!"

"Nay, nay; but it is inconsistent with your good sense to talk thus, without suffering him to plead his own cause.—I protest, if you will not break

the ſeal, I ſhall be tempted to take the liberty of doing ſo myſelf; it is but ſhewing him common juſtice to hear his defence."

"If it muſt be read, Madam," ſaid Maria, "do *you* be kind enough to read it; for indeed *I* cannot."

Lady Davenhill now took the letter, and read as follows:

"My dear Maria,

"In how falſe, how injurious a light have I appeared to you!—This day has unravelled to me a plot of ſo vile and ſo intricate a nature, that I am incapable, in my preſent ſtate of mind, of deſcribing it to you by letter. Permit me, if it is practicable, to have the honour of waiting upon you this evening.—Oh, ſee me! my adored Maria, if it be poſſible!—believe me, I have evidences the moſt ſatisfactory and concluſive, of the total falſity of what has been alledged againſt me.

"If

"If you have loſt all confidence in me, it will I hope return, when I aſſure you that Lady Melmoth is acquainted with facts that invalidate the truth of thoſe aſperſions, which have loſt me your good opinion.—See me, my loved Maria! in the ſacred name of truth, I conjure you to ſee me this evening, if it be poſſible! or if not, I intreat you will ſend me word WHEN you will do me the juſtice to hear me exculpate myſelf from the calumnies which have been fabricated to ruin me in your eſtimation.—I wait your anſwer with torturing impatience, and remain, with the moſt ardent ſincerity,

Your faithfully devoted,

E. AUBREY."

"There! fair Statira," cried her ladyſhip, as ſhe ended; "there is a letter for you!—What do you ſay to it?

it?—Surely you cannot refuſe to write an immediate invitation; eſpecially as the matter is referred to the deciſion of your friend, Lady Melmoth."

"There is indeed moſt aſſuredly," ſaid Maria, "an air of ingenuouſneſs runs through the letter, that I know not how to ſtand againſt; and yet circumſtances conſpire ſo fatally to perſuade me of his duplicity, that, were it not for the alluſion to Lady Melmoth, I could ſcarcely ſuffer myſelf to admit a doubt of it."

"It is highly proper an anſwer ſhould be ſent immediately."

"I know not how to write;—I know not how to ſee him at this time," ſaid Maria, "ſo extremely agitated are my ſpirits."

"Perhaps it would be better I did *both* for you," ſaid her ladyſhip.

"Oh, it would be moſt kind," returned Maria.

"Will

"Will you leave every thing then to my conduct?"

"Moſt readily, moſt thankfully, my deareſt Madam."

Lady Davenhill then called for pen, ink, and paper, and wrote as follows:

SIR,

As I am ſenſible our family muſt receive the higheſt ſatisfaction from the honour of your addreſſes to Miſs Mordaunt, were ſome parts of your conduct towards another lady cleared up; give me leave to aſſure you, that I ſhall ſincerely rejoice to hear any information that may tend to that point. My young friend is at preſent too much indiſpoſed to receive a viſit from you; and has therefore deputed me to have that honour. I ſhall be at home the whole evening; and remain,

SIR,

Your moſt obedient humble ſervant,

CATHERINE DAVENHILL.

*Berkley Square.*

Aubrey

Aubrey obeyed Lady Davenhill's ſummons; and, after ſome preliminary compliments on both ſides, he entered into the following particulars:—

On the evening of the ſecond day after your ladyſhip and Miſs Mordaunt left Dunlough Caſtle, in paſſing thro' the little gallery to my own chamber, I accidentally perceived, in a corner of the floor, a paper, which, having no ſuperſcription, I took the liberty of reading. I found it was a letter, which had been wrapt in a cover;—the dark and ambiguous terms in which it was couched, gave me an extreme curioſity to know to whom it was addreſſed. The hand-writing, I was ſenſible, from the firſt moment I looked upon it, I had ſeen before; and, after ſome time ſpent in fruitleſs endeavours to recollect, I at laſt believed I had hit upon the writer. This was a Miſs Villars, the daughter of a very gallant officer

and

and accompliſhed gentleman, with whoſe friendſhip I was honoured till his death. From the firſt commencement of my acquaintance with Lieut. Villars, I frequently deplored the unrewarded merit of this brave and excellent man; and, by unwearied importunity to thoſe who had the power of ſerving him, I at length had the ſatisfaction of obtaining the promiſe of a captain's commiſſion for him. But alas! a dangerous illneſs had attacked my friend, and the hour I called upon him to inform him of the ſucceſs of my endeavours, was his laſt. This gentleman left an orphan daughter, young, innocent, beautiful, and accompliſhed; whoſe diſtreſs of mind and circumſtances from this great loſs, would have affected with pity any heart. So far from entertaining a wiſh of ſeducing the daughter of my friend, (as I find the caſe has been repreſented to you)

my

my concern for her unprotected ſituation induced me to introduce Miſs Villars to Lady Melmoth, who viſited her in her affliction, and afterwards made her known to the Hon. Mrs. Wilmot, a relation of Sir Robert Melmoth's, who received her into her houſe as her friend and companion.

"Here it was Lord Newry, who viſited in this family on the moſt familiar footing, (being the intimate and particular aſſociate of Mr. Wilmot) frequently ſaw her. Mrs. Wilmot remarked his Lordſhip's attention to Miſs Villars; and knowing his character with reſpect to women, delicately warned her againſt his deſigns, but ineffectually; for, hurried away by a fatal paſſion, ſhe quitted the protection of Mrs. Wilmot, and eloped with her lover.

"Acquainted with theſe circumſtances, and recollecting the hand-writing

ting of the letter in queſtion to be that of Miſs Villars, your ladyſhip will not wonder, I immediately concluded ſhe had written it at the inſtigation of Lord Newry, to injure me with Miſs Mordaunt; and that I looked upon it as a clue that unravelled to me all the peculiarities in Miſs Mordaunt's behaviour, that had given me ſo much uneaſineſs before ſhe left Dunlough Caſtle. So full poſſeſſion did this idea take of my mind, that I ſlept not the whole night; and riſing as ſoon as the day dawned, I called my ſervant, and ordered him to prepare immediately for my journey; and, leaving a note for my ſiſter, in which I apologized for my abrupt departure, I ſet out on my road to London, before the family were ſtirring. It was eight o'clock when I arrived in town; notwithſtanding which, I reſolved to make an effort to ſee Miſs Mordaunt that night; and, haſtily changing

changing my dreſs, I ordered myſelf to be driven to your ladyſhip's houſe, hoping to gain an opportunity of ſpeaking to Miſs Mordant on the ſubject, under pretence of having a commiſſion to deliver from Lady Melmoth. When I got to Berkeley Square, I was told your ladyſhip and Miſs Mordaunt were gone to the play. Having inquired to which theatre, I bade them drive me thither. The houſe was ſo crowded, that, though I ſaw your lovely friend the whole time, I could not get near enough to ſpeak to her. The repreſentation over, I was haſtening to your ſide of the houſe; but before I could get round, you had quitted your box; and I met Miſs Mordaunt in the paſſage, ſeparated from her party. The coldneſs and reſerve of her behaviour, and her abſolute refuſal to receive my viſits, confirmed me in my opinion of what I had ſuſpected; and I went home

home in a ſtate of the moſt extreme perturbation.

The next morning at breakfaſt, I recollected, that once, in paſſing thro' Berner's-ſtreet, Lord Newry had ſhown me the houſe where Miſs Villars lived; to her, therefore, I immediately went. I enquired for Miſs Villars; and being informed ſhe was at home, I ſent word that a gentleman from Lord Newry wiſhed to ſpeak to her. She admitted me. But never ſhall I forget her look of conſternation when I entered the room. Without ſpeaking, I took the letter from my pocket, and aſked if it was not her hand-writing. Concluding that Miſs Mordaunt had made me acquainted with her ſtratagem, her confuſion became ſo great, that ſhe had not recollection enough to deny it; and, faultering out a confeſſion, ſhe intreated me, in the moſt humiliated terms, to forgive the ingrati-

tude ſhe had been guilty of; appealed to my pity for her ſituation, by telling me ſhe had been prevailed on to become the inſtrument of his lordſhip's revenge, by his threats of abandoning her for ever, if ſhe did not. I cannot expreſs to your ladyſhip what I felt in ſeeing the daughter of ſo eſteemed a friend in ſuch a ſituation.

"Towards you, Miſs Villars," ſaid I, "my pity ſuperſedes reſentment; but for that mean-ſouled, unmanly villain——But tell me, Madam—let me know in what manner I have been wronged, that I may know how to attempt my juſtification." She related to me the whole tranſaction, confeſſing that the picture ſhe had put round the neck of her own little girl, had been obtained by the means of Lady Melmoth's woman, who borrowed it from her ladyſhip's drawer for the time it was wanted, and afterwards depoſited

it

it in the ſame place, without its removal having been diſcovered.

"The moment I had gained theſe particulars, I haſtened out of the houſe. When I got home, I inſtantly ſat down, and wrote my ſentiments to Lord Newry; but my letter was brought back unopened, with information, that his lordſhip had ſet out for Paris the day before."

Here Aubrey ended his relation—during which he had been frequently interrupted by Lady Davenhill's rapid obſervations on the proceedings he had recited.

"Vilely, indeed, have you been uſed," ſaid ſhe; "but I hope you will not attempt to puniſh the villainy of Lord Newry, by riſking your own life.—Do not think of it, for heaven's ſake."

Aubrey evaded giving a direct reply, by intreating her ladyſhip to do

him the honour of communicating what he had ſaid to Maria.

"I will, indeed, literally do you the *honour* to relate what I have heard," ſaid her ladyſhip; and bowing, ſhe left him, and went to Maria, who was ſitting in her dreſſing-room, waiting her return with great anxiety.

"Oh, my dear Madam!" cried Maria, the moment her ladyſhip entered to her,—"What intelligence do you bring me? Am I to think of him as I did before thoſe cruel doubts were infuſed into my mind?"

"Indeed, my good child, you are not to think of him as you did before," ſaid her ladyſhip.

"What a fate is mine!" exclaimed Maria, ſinking on the ſopha, and covering her face with her hands;—"Why, Madam, did you perſuade me to open that letter, which has only

rouſed fallacious hopes, that now double my diſappointment and deſpair!"

"Diſappointment and deſpair!"—cried her ladyſhip; "what cauſe is there for ſuch deſpairing expreſſions as thoſe?—what have I ſaid to cauſe theſe violent emotions of diſtreſs?"

"Oh, Madam, have you not ſaid that Aubrey is falſe, deceitful, perjured, baſe?"

"I utter invectives ſo terrible againſt Mr. Aubrey!" cried her ladyſhip; "my good child, what have I ſaid the leaſt approaching to thoſe epithets?"

"It is true, Madam, you have not uſed thoſe epithets; but you have uttered what has the ſame import:—Have you not ſaid I muſt not think of him as I did before ſo black an aſperſion had been thrown on his character?"

"Well, my little impatient couſin," ſaid Lady Davenhill, "and I ſtill ſay you

you muſt not think of him as *you did* before. You muſt think ſtill higher of his merit; for, I aſſure you, I have things to relate, that will enhance it in your eſtimation."

Lady Davenhill then minutely recounted every circumſtance, as it has been ſtated to the reader.

Maria heard, with tears of delight and admiration, the conduct of Aubrey, reſpecting Miſs Villars, deſcribed by her ladyſhip.

"Oh!" cried Maria, "let me ſee him immediately, that I may ſupplicate his forgiveneſs for having liſtened to the voice of detraction, when it attacked a character ſo tender, ſo delicate, ſo noble as his."

"Ring the bell, then, my love, and let us ſend for him."—She did.

A ſervant came—

"Beg Mr. Aubrey to do me the favour

vour to walk into this room," ſaid Lady Davenhill.

Aubrey entered with an air that had in it ſomewhat of reproach; but at ſight of the countenance of Maria, which betrayed her ſelf-reprehenſion for having wrongfully ſuſpected him, the ſoft reproof he had prepared was loſt in the livelieſt ſenſations of delight. And, fondly gazing on her lovely form, he could only expreſs, in a broken ſentence, the pleaſure he felt in being introduced to her by Lady Davenhill.

The dread of a rencontre between Aubrey and Lord Newry was ſpeedily removed from the mind of Maria; the public papers informing her of the cauſe of the precipitate flight of the latter to the continent. In a paroxyſm of brutal rage, he had killed a waiter at a tavern; and, as he could not hope, that in this country his rank and title would command the ſame lenity it might in the kingdom